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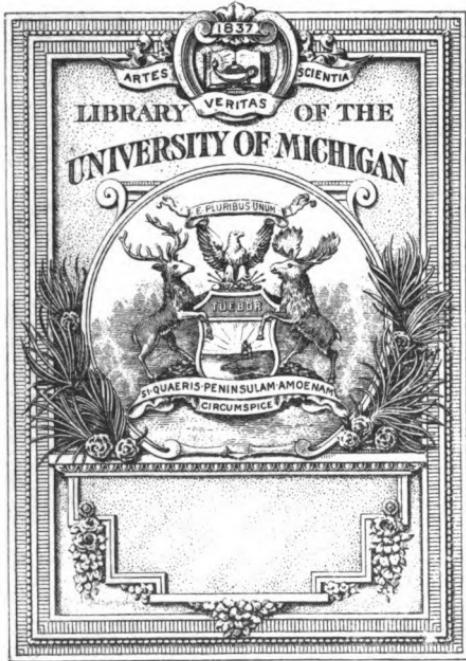
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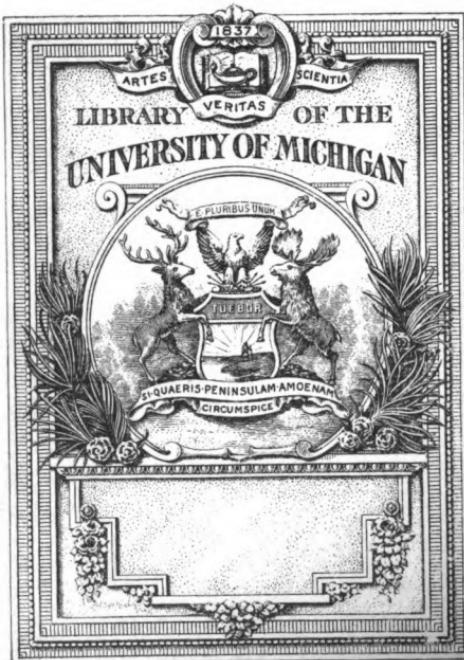
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The poet's charter



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THE POET'S CHARTER
OR
THE BOOK OF JOB

THE POET'S CHARTER OR THE BOOK OF JOB

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Francis W. de K. Morris
BY
F. B. (MONEY) COUTTS-MORRIS
Latimer, Bacon



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TO
MY FRIEND AND COMPANION IN LETTERS
ARTHUR E. J. LEGGE
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK :
IN ANTICIPATION OF HIS DISAGREEMENT :
WHICH IS TO ME MORE VALUABLE
THAN THE AGREEMENT OF OTHERS.

P R E F A C E

To name the *Book of Job* “The Poet’s Charter” may seem to some a presumption; to me it is in the nature of a reverence.

Many years ago I was brought by accident to the study of that profound Poem, and the more I became immersed in it, the more amazed I was at its power and its beauty. I made an analysis of the argument, and “the hollow truisms, the unsufficing half-truths, the false assumptions and malignant insinuations of the supercilious bigots” (namely, Job’s Friends), and “the impressive facts, the piercing outcries, the pathetic appeals, and the close and powerful reasoning”¹ of Job himself, gradually wove

¹ *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, by S. T. Coleridge, pp. 36–37.

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themselves into a coherence, which in its turn gave rise to a poem.

This poem I called *An Essay in a Brief Model*, because Milton called the *Book of Job* “a brief model” of the epic form of poetry, in his *Reason of Church Government*.

Even with the aid of this title, however, few of my readers understood that my poem was an attempt to express the inward meaning of the *Book of Job* in heroic verse; whence I drew the conclusion, not that my poem was obscure, but that my readers were very imperfectly, if at all, acquainted with *Job* and his sorrows; because, whatever verbal difficulties might here and there impede the casual peruser, the general drift of my poem was in plain accordance with its subject.

Therefore I determined to study that marvellous work over again, with all the extraneous assistance that was in my power to use, in order to make trial in prose of what I had failed to do in poetry, and something more besides; that is to say, to exhibit to my countrymen the priceless treasure,

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too long hidden from their eyes under a veil of ecclesiastical glosses, and persuade them of the momentous considerations appertaining to its discovery.

My present book is the result, over which I have spared no pains nor care; and concerning the matter of it, I have no more to say than this brief warning: that they who would journey with a pilgrim on a quest for truth must themselves possess an honest and hearty desire to achieve it, and must start with him from a common or neighbourly ground, lest afterwards they forsake his guidance, because they did not mark his setting forth.

As to the form of it, however, I have two notes to make: one is that during the years in which my waking hours were dominated by the majestic influence of Job all my reading became under contribution to that idea, so that the superfluity of quotation in which I have indulged is not so much by way of authority, as by necessity of illustration; and the other is that I hope devout taste will not be offended by my avoidance

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of capital initials in pronouns referring to the Deity, in which practice I have been content to follow the example of our translators of the Bible.

Lastly, no perfunctory observance of etiquette, but a very lively gratitude constrains me to acknowledge the great assistance that I have received from the careful suggestions of Mr. William Watson, Mr. E. H. Coleridge, Señor I. Albeniz, and Mr. Frederic Chapman.

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“ And now, lastly, will be the time to read with them those organic arts which enable men to discourse and write perspicuously, elegantly, and according to the fittest style, of lofty, mean, or lowly. Logic, therefore, so much as is useful . . . To which Poetry would be made subsequent, or indeed rather precedent, as being less subtile and fine, but more simple, sensuous, and passionate. . . . That sublime art which in Aristotle’s Poetics, in Horace, and the Italian commentaries of Castelvetro, Tasso, Mazzoni, and others, teaches what the laws are of a true epic poem, what of a dramatic, what of a lyric, what decorum is, which is the grand masterpiece to observe. This would make them soon perceive what desppicable creatures our common rhymers and play-writers be; and show them what religious, what glorious and magnificent use might be made of poetry, both in divine and human things.”—John Milton *On Education*.

BOKI
GENESIS

▲

THE POET'S CHARTER
OR
THE BOOK OF JOB

CHAPTER I

THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION

IT is a remarkable symptom of modern civilised life that many books are written, purporting to be religious, which contain merely sentimental morality or some individual view of moral questions.

It is not necessary, for my present purpose, to discuss whether Religion can exist apart from Ethics. At all events the essence of Religion is not Ethics, but something at once infinitely more simple and infinitely more complex.

Of all the definitions of Religion collected

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by Mr. Benjamin Kidd, in his *Social Evolution*,¹ none is equal to that one of Spinoza,² quoted by Matthew Arnold :—“To know and love God is the highest blessedness of men and of all men alike.”³ But love must follow knowledge ; without knowledge there can be no true love, though there may be a superstitious fear or reverence ; and therefore it may be said that the Knowledge of God is the essence of Religion ; or rather, the *Search* for that Knowledge, since the Search must necessarily be as infinite as the Object of it. Hence Dean Farrar well named his book of religious characters *Seekers after God* ; although he omitted the name of the greatest seeker,—Jesus ; regarding him, of course, as the person sought ; wherefore it would appear that he ought

¹ p. 89.

² “The love of God is man’s only true good. . . . Only the knowledge of God will enable us to subdue the hurtful passions. This knowledge in turn leads to the love of God, which is the soul’s union with him.”—*Spinoza, his Life and Philosophy*, by Sir Frederick Pollock, Bart., p. 86.

³ *Essays in Criticism*, p. 366.

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to have entitled his work *Seekers after Jesus.*

Whether the existence of God,—that is, of a Being worthy of Man's love,—be a reasonable supposition is not now in question. Mankind, becoming unconsciously more and more cognisant of the qualities of Life, has deducted therefrom the postulate of God; somewhat as the mathematician, examining the qualities of figures of three dimensions, deducts the postulate of the straight line. It is a deduction, because the line is inherent in those figures; but it is also a postulate, because the line cannot be proved to exist apart from them.

The mathematical analogy, however, can be pressed no farther; for no sooner is the existence of God granted than the problem proposes itself, how to find him; in other words, how to prove the postulate.

Cardinal Newman wrote in his *Apologia pro Vitâ Suâ* that “the being of a God was as certain to him as the certainty of his own existence, though when he tried to put the grounds of that certainty into logical shape

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he found a difficulty in doing so, in mood and figure, to his satisfaction.”¹ Still from that indefinable assurance all the process of his thoughts started.

Both to the theologian and the philosopher this point affords an equal footing. “Not only is the omnipresence of something which passes comprehension,” wrote Mr. Herbert Spencer, “that most abstract belief which is common to all Religions, which becomes the more distinct in proportion as they develop, and which remains after their discordant elements have been mutually cancelled, but it is that belief which the most unsparing criticism of each leaves unquestionable, or rather makes ever clearer. It has nothing to fear from the most inexorable logic, but on the contrary is a belief which the most inexorable logic shows to be more profoundly true than any Religion supposes.”²

¹ p. 241.

² *First Principles*, 1882, p. 45. Quoted by Dean Stanley in his *Christian Institutions*, p. 337. The passage does not, however, occur in the edition of 1900.

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The existence of God having been thus conceived by the human mind, Religion becomes spontaneously instituted, as the means whereby the necessary Search for Knowledge of God may be carried on.

But just in proportion as Religion becomes formulated and grows into an ecclesiastical System, so does her Search for the Knowledge of God cease; and it is the object of this book to show that in fact the Poet, not the Priest¹—Art, not the Church—is the divinely-appointed Seeker for that Knowledge, by whose means it is unceasingly prosecuted.

With whatever temerarious feelings I may approach such a task, I have the full assurance within myself that I do so without prejudice and with the most uncontaminated desire for the truth; nor do I wish anything better than that the timid should now turn back from following the foot-

¹ I should have liked to have avoided the use of this word, which is obnoxious to many worthy sects; yet surely the ancient appellation alone comprehensively designates the official expounders of sacred mysteries, Catholic or *extra Ecclesiam*.

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steps of my pen and leave me to a smaller audience.

And first, inasmuch as some may object that such a work is superfluous, it is necessary to consider what is that special Knowledge of God that the Christian Religion claims to possess; on what ground it rests, and whether its foundations be secure.

Dean Stanley once wrote that "the religious creed of the people of England is a general belief in Providence and in a future life."¹ The word creed is not, of course, here used in its technical sense, and one wishes that the words *a general belief in Providence* did not quite so closely suggest the old bogey of Fate. But, besides this, it is difficult to think that the common conception of Religion is so simple. The human mind loves a mystery, and there are not wanting intimations that the scheme of salvation in vogue is something far more intricate.

¹ Quoting with approval "a celebrated Roman Catholic divine." *Christian Institutions*, p. 307.

CHAPTER II

POPULAR THEOLOGY

CONSCIOUSLY or unconsciously, common credence has balanced the whole structure of Christianity on the story of the Fall of Man. The third chapter of Genesis derives its importance from the fact that it is the cornerstone of Christian Theology. Without a first Adam there could be no second: without a Tree of Death, no Tree of Life: without a penalty incurred, no atonement.

Whether this *Arbor Vitæ* is indigenous to the soil of Christianity need not be discussed. It is certain that it now flourishes there, like a green bay-tree. Professor Draper says: "A British monk who had assumed the name of Pelagius passed (in the early part of the fifth century) through Western Europe and Northern Africa, teaching that death was not introduced into

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the world by the sin of Adam; that, on the contrary, he was necessarily and by nature mortal, and had he not sinned he would nevertheless have died; that the consequences of his sins were confined to himself and did not affect his posterity . . . In Tertullian's statement of the principles of Christianity there is a complete absence of the doctrines of original sin, total depravity, predestination, grace, and atonement. The intention of Christianity as set forth by him has nothing in common with the plan of salvation upheld two centuries subsequently. It is to St. Augustine, a Carthaginian, that we are indebted for the precision of our views on these important points. . . . A consequence of great importance issues from the decision of the Pelagian controversy. The *Book of Genesis* has been made the basis of Christianity.”¹

I am sure I shall be excused if I illustrate the point of argument at which I have now arrived by reference to the two great poems of Milton. If Dante was a prophet of the

¹ *Conflict between Religion and Science*, pp. 56, 57.

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Roman Catholic Church, Milton was certainly a prophet of the Protestant Church ; neither of them orthodox, but both of them exercising a powerful effect on popular belief. In fact, so great has been the influence of the English poet that, as we shall presently see, an exceedingly doubtful portion of celestial history has passed into currency, mainly, if not entirely, on his authority. An inquiry into the doctrines contained in *Paradise Lost* is no mere academic exercise ; it is an inquiry into a system of logic as rigid as the *Pons Asinorum*. The whole story of the siege and capture of the Garden of Eden is a preparation for the successful assault on Paradise ; the walls of Heaven are founded on the ruins of Eden.

In one respect *Paradise Regained* is quite unorthodox, though even more severely logical than ecclesiastical theology. Milton represents the redemption of the world from the consequences of the Fall of Man as accomplished, not by the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, but by his victory over the Devil in the Temptation. At the close

THE POET'S CHARTER
of *Paradise Regained* the Angels, chanting
the praise of Jesus, sing—

Thou hast avenged
Supplanted Adam, and, by vanquishing
Temptation, hast regained lost Paradise.

This is, of course, the exact counter-stroke to Satan's success in the Garden of Eden, and the meaning of calling Jesus the second Adam is herein most clearly seen. Still, it is not the usual view of the Redemption, though in effect it leaves the argument of the sacred drama untouched.

If this has escaped general observation, it is because, just as Dante's *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* are less read than his *Inferno*, so *Paradise Regained* is less read than *Paradise Lost*; and for the same reason,—that the human mind has a natural love of gloom and horror.¹

¹ I regret that this is not the occasion on which to pause over the rhythm of *Paradise Regained*, so full of interest to the student of poetry. It contains one of the loveliest couplets ever introduced as a relief into blank verse—

The sounds and seas with all their finny drove
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move.

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With this exception, and apart from what may be called Technical Theology (such as the doctrine of the Trinity), it is surely fair to say that wherever Christianity is more than a mere congenital superstition, the creed of Milton is the creed of the People. The fall of the Angels; the creation of Man; the fall of Man, as a consequence of the angelic defection; and the redemption of Man, as a consequence of his creation. It is a very well-linked chain of events. The fall of Man depends on the fall of the Angels, and on the fall of Man depends his redemption. Whence it follows that the sin in Heaven produced the salvation of Earth, and the apple of Eden grew into the tree of Calvary.

I shall now venture on a digression from *sec. (a).*
the main theme, in order to make good my THE FALL OF
THE ANGELS. former remark that a doubtful portion of celestial history had passed into currency chiefly on Milton's authority; and I trust that the reader will not find this matter without interest.

In the *Book of Genesis* there is no mention of the Fall of the Angels, though it may

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possibly be said to be logically implied. It is open to question whether there is in Scripture any sure authority at all for the exile of the angels from Heaven. Dean Stanley boldly states that there is not. He is speaking of the *Book of Enoch*, and he says that "the first vision at which the prophet assists is no less than the fall of the angels who kept not their first estate, not the Fall of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, of which neither in the Hebrew nor the Christian Scriptures is there any trace, but the fall of Byron's *Heaven and Earth*, which took place when the Heavenly Watchers descended on the snow-clad top of Hermon, the highest height that an Israelite had ever seen, and intermixed with the daughters of men."¹ Similarly Professor Courthope writes: "Satan nowhere distinctly appears in Bible history as the leader of rebel angels. . . . There is, I believe, no appearance of this portion of the Satanic legend in Christian literature before the poem of Avitus, *De Originali Peccato*, composed towards the end

¹ *The Jewish Church*, vol. iii, pp. 328-329.

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of the fifth century. . . . Long before Dante painted the circles of the *Inferno*, an Anglo-Saxon poet, whether Caedmon or some other is doubtful and immaterial, had furnished in his *Paraphrase of Genesis* a striking narrative containing the germ of *Paradise Lost*, of the events culminating in the fall of man. He describes the rebellion and expulsion from Heaven of the proud angels; the creation of the earth to fill the void left in the system of the universe; the debate of the devils as to the measures to be taken against the new work of the Creator; the mission of one of them to tempt man to disobedience; the arguments employed vainly to seduce Adam, successfully to persuade Eve. It is scarcely necessary to say that none of these incidents are to be found in the narrative of Scripture."¹

Dean Stanley, however, thought that the passage in *Isaiah xiv, verses 12 and 13*, concerning the fall of the Morning Star (that is to say, of Babylon) was the origin, through the Vulgate translation, of the name of

¹ *History of English Poetry*, vol. i, p. 41.

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Lucifer and of the Miltonic doctrine of the fall of the angels.¹

On the other hand, Professor R. G. Moulton has expressed his belief to me that Milton felt himself bound by the verse in the *General Epistle of Jude* (the very words quoted by Dean Stanley): *The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day.*²

Authorities differ; yet is it not more likely that Milton based his epic on the accepted legend rather than on isolated texts of Scripture; on Avitus and the Anglo-Saxon poet, rather than on a single verse of a dubious epistle, even if we were entitled to assume that he did not know that it was dubious?³ It is, of course, perfectly

¹ *The Jewish Church*, vol. iii, p. 57, note.

² Verse 6.

³ It has been pointed out to me that Milton was conversant with the work of Hugo Grotius, *Annotationes in Evangelistas*, published in 1644, in which the writer (1) assigns the authorship of the *Epistle of Jude* to Jude, Bishop of Jerusalem, "Adriani temporibus," and

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true that “the authority attaching to every word of the inspired writings gives an opportunity to the myth-making faculty inherent in human nature. . . . The inward spirit of the letter needed to be explained by the doctors who had given themselves up to the long study of its mysterious truths. . . . A similar method of reasoning . . . has created the whole cycle of legend embodied in the poetical treatment of the devil and the celestial hierarchy.”¹ Certainly, however, not only Milton but the writer of the *Epistle of Jude* found the myth already made. “The existence of the principle of evil is the necessary incident of the existence of the principle of good, as the shadow is the necessary incident of the presence of light. In the old legends of dualism the evil spirit is said to have sent a serpent to ruin the Paradise which the good

(2) quotes *Liber de Morte Mosis*: “Aza et Azael de cælo descendentes viam suam corruerunt”; for this very commentary of Grotius is quoted by Milton in his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*.

¹ Courthope’s *History of English Poetry*, vol. I,
p. 40.

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spirit had made.”¹ It is a very natural and easy process to refer all evil to a supernatural author. But as soon as this is done, another necessity is laid on the myth-maker, supposing him to be a worshipper of one God, and that God a Spirit of Goodness. The question arises, how did the subordinate Spirit of Evil become evil? and the answer is invented that he fell from his first estate, —not, be it noted, because he was tempted (for there was no one to tempt him except God himself),—but because of his own inherent pride.

The childishness of the method is apparent. Yet it has served its purpose; for the instinct of the human mind, confronted by a problem of which it dislikes the conclusion, is to insert terms between the premises and the demonstration, so as to divide the one from the other as far as possible; introducing, as it were, between the two, a debatable land in which careless intellects may lose their way. In the same

¹ Draper's *Conflict between Religion and Science*, p. 15.

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manner the Hindoos are said to believe that the earth rests on an elephant, and the elephant on a tortoise. It is easier for them to credit this than that the earth rests on nothing. In the same way also, "as the next best thing to denying absolutely all connection between God and Creation, the Indian cosmogonies separate the two by unending aeons, and remove him from direct contact with the world by the supposition of emanation upon emanation, in order to support the idea of Divinity as something infinitely removed from man and the world, and even from all action."¹

Of course, in reality, though a million intervening terms were introduced, the problem remains the same, and the conclusion. In the case under discussion they may be stated thus: God is omnipotent and beneficent, yet evil is present in the world; wherefore, apparently, God is either not omnipotent or not beneficent. But just as the Hindoo knows nothing of gravitation, so there may

¹ *The Old Testament and the New Scholarship*, by John P. Peters, p. 41.

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be some law, of which we know nothing, tending to change this conclusion. Thus the search for the knowledge of God inevitably includes the search for the origin and meaning of evil.

It is all very well for Carlyle, thundering from that secular Sinai on which he dwelt, to proclaim : "A vain interminable controversy, touching what is at present called the Origin of Evil or some such thing, arises in every soul since the beginning of the world ; and in every soul that has passed from idle Suffering into actual Endeavouring must first be put an end to. The most in our time have to go content with a simple, incomplete enough Suppression of this controversy ; to a few, some Solution of it is indispensable. In every new era, too, such Solution comes out in different terms, and ever the Solution of the last era has become obsolete, and has become unserviceable. . . . Man's Unhappiness, as I construe, comes of his Greatness. It is because there is an Infinite in him which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury

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under the Finite."¹ In other words, the philosopher takes refuge in clouds just as much as "the most"; gorgeous clouds no doubt, but none the less vapour. The mystery of evil cannot be pushed aside so lightly; because its investigation is part of Man's investigation into God's character.

James Hinton has given us, in the following passage, a beautiful interpretation of sin: "Sin is not a fact or reality, but a negation, a refusal to share in life. We misinterpret what the Bible tells us of heaven. It says, indeed, that God will wipe away all tears, that sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and even that there shall be no death; but it does not tell us that there shall be no phenomenal evil. That is quite another thing. Still there shall be life, yea, more life, still *therefore* evil. . . . Let me only see the evil as it is, O God! and my eyes shall weep no more nor my heart know another pang. The motion of the sun was a source of error to the men of former

¹ *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. II, ch. ix.

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times. . . . The illusion remains, but the error is gone; so shall evil remain, but the grief shall be gone."¹

But there is plenty of grief on earth apparently unconnected with sin, and plenty of pain; and, though Hinton strove hard, he gave us no more explanation of these than does Christianity itself. Yet he was one of the pioneers in the land that may be called the region of Eternal discovery; places into which not even the deepest reverence can forbid intrusion, since, as we shall shortly perceive, we are invited thither by Scripture itself.

But to return: The elaborate metaphysical legend of the Fall of Man contained in the third chapter of Genesis, derived, no doubt, from a period long anterior to that of the People into whose Sacred Writings it found its way, has become an article of belief necessary to the Christian Religion. *As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;* however spiritually the words be understood,

¹ *The Life and Letters of James Hinton*, by Ellice Hopkins, pp. 127-128.

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Redemption and Atonement imply that the penalty of sin was incurred by our "First Parents." Matthew Arnold declared that "plain simple people are the great majority of the human race."¹ This may be true of their manner and mode of life; but it does not at all follow that it is true of their ideas. On the contrary, I suppose that only those who have painfully passed through the realm of fancy and come out on the far side can think plain and simple thoughts.

The plain question for simple Seekers after God is this: What impression of the divine character does this presentment of the origin of Evil, whether regarded as a fact or an allegory, leave on the mind?

God creates angels. A large part of these unfortunately rebel, and for punishment are relegated to the pit. He creates a man and a woman, but unfortunately one of the fallen angels escapes from hell, and successfully tempts them to sin. How un-

¹ *God and the Bible*, p. 73.

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fortunate God is ! He fails to shut up his enemies securely, and he fails to guard his children, Adam and Eve, securely, and then he pronounces a fearful condemnation against them for an action entirely due to his own carelessness or ineptitude, if not to his own design.

Milton was under no delusion as to the extremely intricate logical difficulties of this account. He puts into the mouth of God a long speech intended to vindicate himself against the charges to which the events naturally give rise.¹ This is summarised in a later passage, in which the Deity lays great stress on Man's free-will and his own consequent irresponsibility.² But free-will has really nothing to do with the matter. If God did not intend evil to enter into the world, he is neither omnipotent nor omniscient, since he did not prevent it. If he intended it, nothing, of course, could prevent it, and therefore Adam and Eve were blameless, and it was an in-

¹ *Paradise Lost*, Bk. iii, 80-134.

² *Ibid.* Bk. x, 1-16.

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justice to punish them. In either case the Deity is in a ridiculous position, being either deceived or deceiver. Nothing more degrading to the conception of the Godhead can be imagined.

The conclusion of the whole matter is this: Whether it be due to love of authority in the teacher or to the general inability of the human mind to project itself beyond its immediate surroundings, the fact remains that the Religion of a particular period is always supposed to be final. In the Christian belief this is the more extraordinary, since what then becomes of the continuous revelation of the Holy Ghost? Yet the asserted finality of the Christian doctrine is surely beyond dispute.

But although in all ages and in all Religions the same error has prevailed, what idea can be more truly irreligious than that of the finality of Religion? For how can the Incomprehensible be comprehended, or the Infinite enclosed by the finite? On the contrary, the cardinal doctrine of all Religions ought to be that, inasmuch as it

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is contrary to reason to suppose that the less can contain the greater, or that Man can comprehend God, so must Man continuously and for ever seek for new knowledge of God.

BOOK II
JOB

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE most beautiful and powerful exemplification of the necessity and sacredness of Man's unceasing Search for the Knowledge of God is contained in the Scriptures themselves, in the *Book of Job*.

It is well known that there are two branches of criticism, not only of our Bible, but of all other collections of sacred writings, and of every book, sacred or profane, which is old enough to call for critical examination. One of these is called the Higher Criticism, and is concerned with the origin, authorship, place, and period of production of the writings submitted to it; while the other is concerned merely with the text—its correctness, meaning, and translation into other languages. The term Higher Criticism is

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an unfortunate one, as it seems to denote that this branch has superseded the other, whereas it is really the complement of it. It is easy to understand how greatly the meaning of a book may be elucidated by a knowledge of the circumstances under which it was written, and how necessary it is to disentangle the parts of a book that had been composed by one author at one period from those composed by another at a different time. I do not propose, however, except incidentally, to enter into any question either of Higher or Lower Criticism in the dissertation which now follows concerning the *Book of Job*. Mr. Froude's reproach in his article in the *Westminster Review* in 1853 is no longer applicable, at least to its full extent. "It will be matter some day of curious inquiry," he said, "to ascertain why, notwithstanding the high reverence with which the English people regard the Bible, they have done so little, in comparison with their continental contemporaries, towards arriving at a proper understanding of it." He then refers to

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three German Commentaries,¹ and continues : “The books named below form but a section of a long list which has appeared during the last few years in Germany on the *Book of Job* alone. . . . Able men in England employ themselves in matters of a more practical character, and while we refuse to avail ourselves of what has been done elsewhere, no book or books which we produce on the interpretation of Scripture acquire more than a partial or an ephemeral reputation.”²

Plenty of English books are now published, founded on German research and scholarship. Four lie before me on the subject of Job:—Dean Bradley’s, which is cautious and devout; Samuel Cox’s, which is abundant; Professor Moulton’s,³

¹ Ernest Renan, in his translation of the *Book of Job*, cites twenty-one German commentators, and this by no means exhausts the list. Pp. ix, x, and xxxiv, note.

² See *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, vol. i, pp. 281, 282.

³ I refer to Professor Moulton’s smaller work, in Macmillan’s series, *The Modern Reader’s Bible*; but I am also familiar with his larger work, *The Literary Study of the Bible*.

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which is a model of concise thoroughness ; and Professor Cheyne's, which is boldly erudite.

Sect. (a).
THE GREAT-
NESS OF THE
POEM.

That the people of England do not, however, love the *Book of Job* as they ought to love it is, I think, not to be gainsaid ; for who that has ever studied it—not like Gregory the Great or S. Jerome, in the pride of a preconceived opinion as to what it ought to mean, but with the humility of one to whom it has been promised that he shall be taught all things—does not endorse Carlyle's words when he exclaims : “ I call that, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written with pen. One feels, indeed, as if it were not Hebrew, such a noble universality, different from noble patriotism or noble sectarianism, reigns in it. A noble Book ; all men's Book ! It is our first, oldest statement of the never ending Problem—man's destiny and God's ways with him here in this earth. And all in such free, flowing outlines, grand in its sincerity and its simplicity ; in its epic melody, and repose of reconciliation. There

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is the seeing eye, the mildly understanding heart. So *true* every way ; true eyesight and vision for all things ; material things no less than spiritual. . . . Such living likenesses were never since drawn. Sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation ; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind ;—so soft and great ; as summer midnight, as the world with its seas and stars. There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit.”¹

All men's book ! How one wishes it were !
There is nothing comparable with it except the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus. It is eternal, illimitable ; in magnitude and magnificence it is unsurpassed and unsurpassable. Its grandeur is prophetic and poetic ; its scope is the relation between God and Man. It is a vast liberation, a great gaol-delivery of the spirit of Man ; nay, rather a great Acquittal.

I do not believe that the book is well known in this intimate sense. No doubt the inadequacies of the *Authorised Version*

¹ *Heroes and Hero Worship*, p. 49.

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have stood greatly in the way of general appreciation, as well as the ancient fallacy of spiritual interpretation. In spite of the noble and sonorous diction of the translation, we must remember that the translating authors of it had not, in the reign of James I, the knowledge possessed by scholars now; while on the other hand they were dealing with the most difficult of all Hebrew compositions. "St. Jerome, in the fourth century," remarks Dean Bradley, "complains, that having engaged a Jewish Rabbi's help, and having laboured long with him over the *Book of Job*, he knew at the end what he knew before and nothing more; and Luther, whose few words on the book are as keen sighted as they are precious, speaks in his own quaint way of the difficulties of the Hebrew: Job, he says, is suffering more from my version than from the taunts of his friends, and would prefer his dunghill to my translation of his lamentations. . . . The difficulty has been greatly lessened by bringing to bear on these unknown words and phrases the light gained by a

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careful study of kindred dialects of the sister language, Arabic, the other great daughter of the parent Semitic stock.”¹

Milton had a mind to take the *Book of Job* for the subject of his epic. In the *Reason of Church Government* he writes: “Time serves not now, and perhaps I might seem too profuse to give any certain account of what the mind at home, in the spacious circuits of her musing, hath liberty to propose to herself, though of highest hope and hardest attempting; whether that epic form whereof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso, are a diffuse, and the *Book of Job* a brief, model.”

This also was one of the three subjects that Shelley meditated as the groundwork for lyrical dramas, the other two being the madness of Tasso and *Prometheus Unbound*. “This design,” says Professor Dowden, “he never abandoned in idea, although no trace of an independent drama suggested by the most majestic of the Hebrew writings re-

¹ *Lectures on the Book of Job*, p. 182.

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mains among his papers. In 1821, when engaged upon his lyrical drama of *Hellas*, Shelley reverted in thought to his project of three years earlier, and wrote those noble fragments of a *Prologue to Hellas* deciphered by the piety of Mr. Garnett, in which the scene is the roofless Senate House of God, whose floor is chaos. The speakers are the angelic Herald of Eternity, the Christ, and Satan standing, as does the adversary in the *Book of Job*, among the sons of God.”¹

Lastly, sixty years ago the poet-painter, William Blake, drew some wonderfully powerful illustrations to the *Book of Job*, with one curious divergence from the course of the story to which I shall have occasion to allude.²

These men understood the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. But to the greater number of persons the *Book of Job* suggests little more than the Patri-

¹ *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, vol. II, p. 328.

² *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, in twenty-one plates, invented and engraved by William Blake. Published by the author and Mr. J. Linnell. March, 1826. Reproduced in Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*. Macmillan, 1883.

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arch's patience, his Comforters, and his wife's wickedness; possibly also the apparition that made Eliphaz' hair stand on end. They perceive neither its consummate art nor its transcendent importance.

Dr. Johnson spoke of the New Testament as "the most difficult book in the world, for which the study of a life is required,"¹ but very often our knowledge of the Bible is confined to a few texts or a few chapters, which are used as a kind of incantation or exorcism, on which the rest of the Scriptures are supposed to depend. To these selected texts the remainder of the sacred writings must conform, or it will be the worse for them.

Few parts of the Bible have suffered more from this inverted method of searching the Scriptures than the dramatic story of the Patriarch of Uz. "A conspicuous result of this kind of interpretation," says Professor Courthope, "is found in the *Commentary* of Gregory the Great on the *Book*

¹ *Life of Samuel Johnson*, by James Boswell, vol. III, p. 15.

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of *Job*, in one passage of which he says that even the mention of particular times and seasons in the Bible is meant to have a moral significance. Thus, when we are told, in the Gospel narrative of the events leading to the Crucifixion, that Peter stood at the fire of coals, for it was winter, and warmed himself, this is symbolical of the coldness of heart that led the Apostle to deny Christ ; and, again, there is allegory in the fact that the angels visit Abraham at midday, but enter Sodom by night.”¹

But, apart from such childishness, the question of spiritual interpretation, in the larger sense, is surely very simple, and depends whether we can violently force our intelligence to suppose that inspired writings, like the *Book of Job*, were devoid of spiritual significance at the time at which they were composed, and dependent for their spiritual value on events that occurred many centuries later.

In the case of the *Book of Job*, however, there is a special reason why even the strictest

¹ *History of English Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 40.

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sect of Christians should examine and analyse it entirely for its own sake, unprejudiced by the revelation or theology or doctrine of a later age; that is to say, that as the whole structure of Christianity rests on the Fall of Man, or in other words on a particular explanation of the mystery of evil, so the *Book of Job* deals from beginning to end with that very mystery.

Dean Stanley speaks of “the doctrine of ^{Sec. (b).} the Evil Spirit, from the *Book of Job* down ^{THE SATAN} to the *Little Master of La Motte Fouqué*.¹” ^{OF THE} ¹ *PROLOGUE.* And no sooner do we open the *Book of Job* than we are confronted with the name of Satan. This is in the prose Prologue of the poem, wherein Satan obtains God’s leave to afflict Job, in order to try his righteousness.

Professor Moulton holds that “this Spirit is a different being from our familiar Devil,” *who, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour*² (and, at the same time, according to Jude, is reserved in

¹ *The Jewish Church*, vol. iii, p. 149.

² *1 Peter v*, 8.

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everlasting chains under darkness). “Unquestionably,” says the Professor, “in this passage” (that is, in the Prologue already mentioned) “and the precisely similar passage in *Zechariah*,¹ the word is the title of an office, not the name of an individual. The margin of the Revised Version gives ‘the Adversary’; the word expresses that he is the adversary of the saints in the same way that an inspector or examiner may be considered as adverse to those he inspects or examines. . . . He appears on the scene among the sons of God; and there is nothing to distinguish his reception from the reception of the rest. As other sons of God may have one or another of the “morning stars” in their guardianship, so the Adversary is the Guardian Spirit of the Earth.”²

I am not disposed, however, to spend much time over the identity of the Devil; for though the mystery of evil centres in his personality, I must regard it, for my present

¹ III, 1.

² *The Book of Job*, pp. 15, 16.

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purpose, as a digressive, though fascinating subject. The real value of the *Book of Job* lies not in the Prologue or Epilogue, but in the dramatic argument between the Patriarch and his Friends. Still I would venture to doubt whether any true distinction could be drawn between Satan and Satan. We must suppose that the tradition developed. Indeed, Professor Moulton suggests as much. For even Job's adversary bears the essentially devilish characteristic of tempting men. What he desires the Lord to allow him to do is nothing more nor less than to tempt Job to blaspheme. *Put forth thy hand now*, he says to Jehovah, *and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce thee to thy face.* And when that temptation has failed he suggests, *Put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce thee to thy face.* God is thus made directly responsible for the temptation which it is the adversary's proper business to suggest, a state of things curiously illustrated by the passages *II Samuel xxiv, 21*, and *I Chronicles xxi, 1*, "where the same tempta-

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tion, which in one book is ascribed to God, is in another ascribed to Satan.”¹

An interesting work might be written on the history of Satan and his transformation from the servant to the enemy of God. In Christian theogony he has, of course, always appeared in the latter character; as time went on, with many monkish embellishments; as “in the *York Miracle Play*, where he tries to prevent Christ’s Crucifixion, and inspires the dream of Pilate’s wife, his interest lying in preventing Man’s redemption.”² But it was perhaps not until the *Book of Genesis* had been made the basis of Christianity, in consequence of the Pelagian controversy, as already observed, that the logical necessity was seen of accounting for the fall and punishment of Man by a similar fall and punishment of Angels, in order to clear God’s attributes of omnipotence and omniscience from doubt and his character from injustice. How much

¹ Stanley’s *Jewish Church*, vol. 1, p. 42, note.

² Courthope’s *History of Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 406. Professor Moulton says that “Bishop Bickersteth, in his

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the dubious text of the dubious Jude may have encouraged this doctrine there is no telling.

The scene in Heaven, depicted in the prologue of the *Book of Job*, may be compared with the similar one in *Zechariah*, in which Satan is rebuked,¹ and the opening of Goethe's *Faust* is to be compared with both.

Mr. Philip Bailey's *Lucifer* is also a notable character. He is exceedingly human, and falls in love with a mortal maiden, and, what is more, is loved in return. *Festus* is, indeed, a most noble poem, full of great wheeling circuits of thought.

poem entitled *Yesterday, To-day, and For Ever*, has reconstructed the biblical story of Milton, and harmonised the conception of Satan in Job with the conception in the New Testament."—*The Book of Job*, p. 149. Even in *Paradise Lost* the infernal personage is not represented as being such a father of lies as one might expect, for whereas in Book ix Satan promises that if Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit they shall be as gods, knowing both good and evil, the Almighty in Book xi endorses this pronouncement as true, saying :

"Like one of us Man has become
To know both good and evil."

¹ III, 1, 2.

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If the poet's wings ever and anon flag, it is because he is always strenuously endeavouring to follow the Almighty to his secret pavilion on the other side of space. The work is a great attempt to set forth a Deity worthy of our love and reverence.

But in regard merely to the personification of the element of evil, Byron's Lucifer stands far ahead of all. It is in the poem called *Cain* that this character occurs, not in *Heaven and Earth*, referred to by Dean Stanley in connection with the first vision in the *Book of Enoch*. In the latter poem, Byron himself refers to the *Book of Enoch*, and his two erring angels bear the same names as those in Enoch's vision, namely, Samiasa and Azaziel.¹ The poet's story is, in fact, the same as that in the *Book of Enoch*, except that he never wrote the projected second part.² He quotes, however, as the prefix to the poem, not the *Book of Enoch*, but *Genesis*: *And it came to pass . . .*

¹ See Mr. E. H. Coleridge's Notes in the *Works of Lord Byron*, vol. v, p. 302.

² *Ibid.*, p. 321, note.

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*that the sons of God saw the daughters of men
that they were fair, and they took them wives
of all which they chose.*¹ The first part of
the poem closes with the destruction of the
earth by the Deluge, and the second part
would have contained the condemnation and
punishment of the angels. In Scene III
Japhet reaches a cavern in the Caucasus, from
which a rushing sound is heard and shouts
of laughter; afterwards a spirit passes.
Japhet speaks to the spirit and addresses it—

Thou unknown, terrible, and indistinct,
Yet awful thing of shadows.

The spirit derides Japhet's lamentations, and
the latter exclaims—

How the fiend mocks the torments of a world,
The coming desolation of an orb.

Afterwards other spirits come forth, glorying
in the approaching ruin.

This seems intended for the mouth of
Hell, but there is no appearance of Satan,
unless the mocking fiend were he. But
in *Cain* we get a grand and subtle con-

¹ vi, 2.

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ception of the Devil, far superior to Milton's sprawling dragon or Dante's man-eating Colossus. It is in truth a most magnificent drama, though not in the playable sense of the word. Byron himself calls it a Mystery; referring to the Mysteries of the monks, which were the foundation of English drama. It is marred by the poet's ineradicable carelessness of rhythm and metrical art;¹ yet "Goethe said that its beauty is such as we shall not see a second time in the world; Scott declared that the author had matched Milton on his own ground; and Shelley wrote: 'Cain is Apocalyptic; it is a revelation never before communicated to man.'" I quote from Mr. E. H. Coleridge's exhaustive Prefatory Note in the edition already cited, and I

¹ There is also a careless infringement of dramatic propriety; for whereas Adah, in Cain's presence, declares that she knows nothing of death, it is also made clear that Abel is in the habit of sacrificing lambs or sheep to Jehovah. Milton, wiser, makes it in a very beautiful passage one of the first signs of the Fall that bird begins to prey on bird and beast on beast. (*Paradise Lost*, Book xi.)

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do so because I am always amazed that such a work as *Cain* is not better known. But then the *Book of Job* is not well known either, as I shall have occasion to show later on.

It is noticeable that the arguments of Lucifer in *Cain* are somewhat similar to those of Job, whence it would be easy to enter upon a speculation that phenomenal evil may be only an instrument for good (which is, in fact, the contention, I take it, of Bailey's *Festus*). I must, however, content myself with quoting one passage from the conversation between Cain and Lucifer, in Act i, Scene i:—

Cain. Thou look'st almost a God and—

Lucifer. I am none.

And having failed to be one would be naught
Save what I am. He conquered, let Him reign.

Cain. Who?

Lucifer. Thy sire's Maker and the earth's.

Cain. And heaven's,

And all that in them is. So I have heard
His seraphs sing, and so my father saith.

Lucifer. They say—what they must sing and say on pain
Of being that which I am—and thou art—
Of spirits and of men.

Cain. And what is that?

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Lucifer. Souls who dare use their immortality—
Souls who dare look the omnipotent tyrant in
His everlasting face and tell Him that
His evil is not good.

This conversation illustrates the intrinsic difference between Lucifer's attitude and Job's; for Lucifer thought that he had full knowledge of God, but Job knew that he had not. The one fancied that he had found God, and the other was searching for him.

I cannot do better than close this portion of my work with a passage from that great genius not yet fully recognised, that great prophet not yet fully understood, William Blake; which I shall recommend no farther than to say, that though mystical, it is full of matter :—

“ Those who restrain desire do so because theirs is weak enough to be constrained, and the restrainer or reason usurps its place and governs the unwilling.

And, being restrained, it by degrees becomes passive, till it is only the shadow of desire.

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The history of this is written in *Paradise Lost*, and the Governor or Reason is called Messiah.

And the original Archangel, or possessor of the command of the heavenly host, is called the Devil or Satan, and his children are called Sin and Death.

But in the *Book of Job*, Milton's Messiah is called Satan.

For this history has been adopted by both parties.

It, indeed, appeared to Reason as if Desire was cast out. But the Devil's account is that Messiah fell, and formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss.

This is shown in the Gospel, where he prays to the Father to send the Comforter, or Desire, that Reason may have ideas to build on—the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than he who dwells in flaming fire.

Know that after Christ's death he became Jehovah.

But in Milton the Father is Destiny, the Son a Ratio of the five senses, and the Holy Ghost Vacuum.

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Note, the reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils and Hell,¹ is because he was a true Poet, and of the Devil's party without knowing it.”²

Sec. (c).
THE SCENE
AND SITUATION.

The author of the *Book of Job* founded his work on the traditional history of a real man, a Patriarch who lived at an unknown date “in the Hauran, on the east of Jordan, in the upper part of that fertile volcanic region which stretches from Syria to Idumea, north of Edom, north even of Moab, within easy reach of Damascus itself. The Arabs who live in this district to-day claim it as the land of Job.”³ The story of the Patriarch was handed down from generation to generation, till, “in the age of Solomon, at once the most catholic and the most literary period of Hebrew history, a gifted and inspired poet threw the tradition

¹ A profoundly critical remark and of wide application, whatever else it may be.

² *The Voice of the Devil.* See *Selections from the Writings of William Blake*, p. 153.

³ Cox's *Commentary on the Book of Job*, p. 10.

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into the splendid dramatic form in which we now possess it.”¹

The Prologue, after narrating how Satan obtained leave of the Lord to tempt Job to renounce the Lord to his face, presents the spectacle of the righteous and once prosperous Patriarch, not only bereft of all his possessions and all his children, but “afflicted with elephantiasis, the severest and most terrible form of leprosy. Beginning with grievous ulcers, it eats like a cancer through the whole body, swelling the limbs until they resemble the limbs of an elephant (whence the name) and even causing them to rot off piecemeal.”²

It is to be remarked (since it is the intention of the Hebrew author to omit no element of misery) that “between Job’s first trial, in which he is reduced from the condition of a rich nobleman and a happy father

¹ Cox’s *Commentary*, p. 9. Prof. Cheyne, agreeing with other critical authorities, places the period between Isaiah and Jeremiah. (See his *Job and Solomon*, p. 74.)

² *Ibid.*, p. 49. There is a vivid passage concerning leprosy, especially in the “elephantine” form, in Borrow’s *Bible in Spain*, pp. 269–271.

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of fair and beautiful children to the state of a childless beggar, and his second, the attack of his foul disease, many months intervene—months in which his kinsfolk drew back and stood aloof from him, and his most inward friends learned to abhor him.”¹

“He lies outside the city, the nobles of which used to do him reverence, and in the gate of which he used to sit and administer justice, his lightest word being eagerly caught up and deferred to.”² He lies upon the Mezbele or the heap of refuse that accumulates outside Arab villages, and is thus described by Wetzstein: “The dung which is heaped upon the Mezbele of the Hauran villages is not mixed with straw, which in that warm and dry land is not needed for litter, and it comes mostly from solid-hoofed animals, as the flocks and oxen are left over-night in the grazing places. It is carried in baskets in a dry state to this place before the village, and usually burnt

¹ Cox's *Commentary*, p. 56; referring to *Job* vii, 3; xix, 8–22; xxx, 1–15.

² *Ibid.*, p. 30; referring to *Job* xxix, 7–17.

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once a month. . . . The ashes remain. . . . If the village has been inhabited for centuries, the Mezbele reaches a height far overtopping it. The winter rains reduce it into a compact mass, and it becomes by and by a solid hill of earth. . . . The Mezbele serves the inhabitants for a watch-tower, and in the sultry evenings for a place of concourse, because there is a current of air on the height. There all day long the children play about it; and there the outcast, who has been stricken with some loathsome malady, and is not allowed to enter the dwellings of men, lays himself down, begging an alms of the passers-by by day, and by night sheltering himself among the ashes which the heat of the sun has warmed.”¹

Here, then, lies “the forsaken grandee”; a tormented Dives, but a righteous one; almost a petty king; but now “subject to the scorn of his tribe, the insolence of the very outcasts whom he had once disdained to rank with the dogs of his flocks, and even the laughter and mockery of the little

¹ Moulton’s *Book of Job*, p. 149.

THE POET'S CHARTER

children who play about him, and full of the intensest and most hopeless anguish of body and mind.”¹ How much more wretched was this Semitic Prometheus than his Grecian analogue? The Fire-stealer, chained to his rock on the Caucasus, had at least the pleasure of his own unbending pride, and the knowledge of his final deliverance and the triumph of his cause; whereas, although Job is anything but *patient* (as we shall see), yet he is not unsubmissive to the divine will. He never indulges in the satisfaction of renouncing God,—of treating God as his enemy; and he never but once rises to the expectation that his wrongs will be righted, and even then he thinks it will only be after his death.²

The parallel between Prometheus and Job is, however, much more exact than is generally recognised, though the opening scene more nearly suggests the Crucifixion than Job's agony; especially as Prometheus (himself a

¹ Cox's *Commentary*, p. 17; referring to *Job* xix, 13–15; xxx, 1–15; xix, 18.

² xix, 23–27.

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god) is expiating the sin of loving Man, which he has shown by giving Man the means of inventing Art.¹ The Chorus of sea-nymphs, for instance, is a very close counterpart to the Chorus of Job's friends; and the opening speech of Prometheus on the arrival of the Nymphs resembles that with which Job breaks the silence, in presence of his friends:—

Under earth, under Hades,
Where the home of the shade is,
All into the deep, deep Tartarus,
I would he had hurled me adown;
I would he had plunged me, fastened thus
In the knotted chain with the savage clang,
All into the dark, where there should be none,
Neither God nor another, to laugh and see.²

After Prometheus has told them his story, and how he pitied the forsaken world of men, the Nymphs exclaim—

Seest thou not that thou hast sinned?³

¹ Lines 1-11 and 109-113.

² 152-157. I use Mrs. Barrett Browning's translation.

³ 259-260.

THE POET'S CHARTER

And Prometheus replies bitterly—

It is in truth
An easy thing to stand aloof from pain,
And lavish exhortation and advice
On one vexed sorely by it.¹

Oceanus then appears, and gives the familiar advice in a long speech—

Do not spurn against the pricks.²
Prometheus, art thou ignorant of this,
That words do medicine anger?

Prometheus. If the word
With seasonable softness touch the soul,
And, where the parts are ulcerous, sear them not
By any rudeness.³

Remembering Job's ulcers, this speech would have fitted him even better than Prometheus.

After the episode of Io's entrance and frenzied flight the remainder of the tragedy is occupied with the colloquy between Prometheus and Hermes, who, like the Deity in the *Book of Job*, is accompanied by a storm, and, in this case, an earthquake. The reproofs

¹ 263-265.

² 323.

³ 379-380.

OR, THE BOOK OF JOB

of Hermes, however, have no effect on Prometheus, but the Nymphs are terrified into repudiating the suffering god and all his works.

This latter portion of the drama¹ has the strongest likeness to many parts of Job; of which, however, the proper proportions of my subject now forbid illustration.

Job's refusal to please his own pride by becoming Satanic,—that is, by ceasing to search for Knowledge of God or boasting that he already possesses it—is cleverly accentuated by the author of the poem; for when his wife visits him, this is the very thing which she invites him to do. Satan's suggested temptation is reproduced in her lips, the Hebrew word translated *renounce* being the same word as he had used. *Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity?* she cries; *renounce God, and die!*² This little touch, carrying on at the same time the dramatic intention, would alone prove the master-hand of a great poet.

In the scene of the punishment of Falstaff

¹ 944-1093.

ii, 9.

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in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Ford the following reference to Job's wife :—

Mrs. Page. Why, sir John, do you think, though we would have thrust virtue out of our hearts by the head and shoulders, and have given ourselves without scruple to hell, that ever the devil could have made you our delight ?

Ford. What, a hodge-pudding ? a bag of flax ?

Mrs. Page. A puffed man ?

Page. Old, cold, withered, and of intolerable entrails ?

Ford. And one that is as slanderous as Satan ?

Page. And as poor as Job ?

Ford. And as wicked as his wife ?¹

Nor must S. T. Coleridge's humorous verses be forgotten, which are a translation of Lessing's imitation of one of John Owen's *Epigrammata* :—²

Sly Beelzebub took all occasions
To try Job's constancy and patience.
He took his honours, took his health,
He took his children, took his wealth,
His servants, horses, asses, cows—
And the sly Devil did *not* take his spouse.

¹ Act v, Sc. 5.

² Bk. III, 199.

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But Heaven that brings out good from evil,
And loves to disappoint the Devil,
Had predetermined to restore
Twofold all Job had before—
His children, camels, horses, cows—
Short-sighted Devil *not* to take his spouse.¹

The cynical point of which is, that had Satan deprived Job of his wife, Heaven would afterwards have cursed the Patriarch with *two others*!

It may be doubted, however, whether Job's wife was really wicked. It may be that the sight of her husband's desolation and misery wrung from her an hysterical cry of anguish. This seems to have been William Blake's view, for in his illustrations of the *Book of Job* he portrays Job's wife kneeling, from beginning to end, beside her husband and sharing his wretchedness. It is however, as already observed, clearly the object of the writer of the poem to deepen the Patriarch's distress in every possible way, and we must therefore sup-

¹ *Poetical Works*, 1893, p. 444. I have a haunting impression that Luther said or wrote something of the same nature.

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pose that his wife's suggestion, which he gently reproves, must have greatly added to his mental torture. The culmination of his misery, however, has yet to be attained. His three friends are on the road to share his grief with him; but, as we shall see, their attempted condolences drive him to the verge of madness; for while they are jealous for their own belief, he, like Elijah, is very jealous for Jehovah.¹

Here, then, is the setting of the scene of the drama. "The sufferer," says Professor Moulton, "sits on the ash-mound as on a stage, with all surrounding nature for scenery; round about, stand a chorus of silent spectators gazing on the fallen glory of their land; travellers, too, stop to wonder at the sight, some smiting on their breasts as they go on their way to spread the sad story abroad, some lingering, like Elihu, to gather wisdom. Lastly the three friends of Job, in the pomp of woe and exalted station approach. *And when they lifted up their eyes afar off and knew him not* (because of the

¹ 1 Kings xix, 10, 14.

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ravages of his disease), they lifted up their voices and wept, and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward Heaven. As they ascend the mound the spectators reverently make way for them and they sit down opposite their comrade on the bare ground. The scene is complete; yet all wait for the suffering hero himself to break the painful silence. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great."¹

The loitering Elihu mentioned above was a foreigner, an Aramaean Arab, and a much younger man than either Job or his friends. It is not to be supposed that he stayed beside the mourners all the seven days and nights of watching; but at all events he was there on the eighth day, and after listening, at first with respect, to the controversy between the stricken Patriarch and his comforters, he can contain himself

¹ All this is in accordance with Eastern etiquette.
See Moulton's *Book of Job*, pp. xviii and xix.

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no longer, but forthwith delivers his own opinions. As might, perhaps, be expected, though he repudiates the arguments of the friends, he has really nothing to add to them. He is the typical *young man*, burning to instruct his elders, and in spite of the critical doubt "whether his intervention is part of the original poem, or only a late, spurious, and worthless addition by some unknown hand,"¹ it certainly adds a touch of subtle humour to the situation. It seems, however, a strong argument against the genuineness of his speeches, that, considering he only reiterates the doctrines of Job's three friends, the Lord should censure them, but not him, in the admittedly genuine Epilogue.

¹ Cox's *Commentary*, p. 406; Renan's *Translation*, pp. xxxiv–xxxviii.

CHAPTER II

THE COLLOQUIES

ON the eighth day after the arrival of the friends, the real drama begins; the spiritual drama, the contact and contest of soul with soul. For of dramatic action in the modern sense there is none; we are brought, not into the presence of bodily passion, but of intellectual; which is far greater, more poignant, more deadly, but far more rare. The stress of argument is intensified as the poem proceeds, but it cannot be said to do so by any very clear or continuous grades; for the Oriental mind seems to delight in repetition and the picking up of dropped threads.

As I have before observed, it is in these Colloquies between Job and his Friends that the wonder and value of the Poem consists, and it will be now my difficult task to dis-

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entangle their argument from the Oriental intricacy and illustration that surround them, so far as a long and loving study of them permits.¹

Job at last opens his mouth with a curse on the day of his birth. It is more than that; it is the old human cry, Why was I born, or, if I had to be born, why did I survive my birth?

For now should I have lien down and been quiet ;
I should have slept ; then had I been at rest,
With kings and councillors of the earth
Which built solitary piles for themselves . . .
There the wicked cease from troubling ;
And there the weary be at rest.²

The whole of this curse, contained in the third chapter, should be compared with Adam's lament in the Tenth Book of *Paradise Lost*. Milton must surely have had Job's words strongly in his mind when he wrote these lines :—

¹ I use the text of the *Revised Version*, including marginal alternatives, as it appears in Prof. Moulton's *Book of Job*, with its Redistribution of Speeches in the third round of Colloquies.

² III, 13–14, 17.

OR, THE BOOK OF JOB

His doom is fair,

That dust I am, and shall to dust return.
O welcome hour whenever ! why delays
His hand to execute what his decree
Fixed on this day ? why do I overlive ?
Why am I mocked with death, and lengthened out
To deathless pain ? How gladly would I meet
Mortality, my sentence, and the earth
Insensible ! how glad would lay me down
As in my mother's lap ! There I should rest,
And sleep secure ; his dreadful voice no more
Would thunder in my ears ; no fear of worse
To me and to my offspring would torment me
With cruel expectation.

“ Eliphaz leads the case for the Friends, *Sec. (a).*
both on account of his superior age and *THE FRIENDS'*
also because he is a native of a reputed
land of wisdom, Teman, a district on the
north-east of Edom, within easy reach of
the Hauran. Its inhabitants were long
famed for wisdom throughout the East,
and especially for the wisdom which clothes
itself in proverbs, parables, and dark ora-
cular sayings.”¹ He takes Job’s despairing,
impatient mood, as clear evidence that the

¹ Cox’s *Commentary*, p. 57.

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Patriarch's calamities have been occasioned by sin :—

Who ever perished being innocent ?
Or where were the upright cut off? . . .
For affliction cometh not forth of the dust,
Neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.¹

It is probable that Eliphaz and his two comrades may, on their first arrival, have gone to Job's house, and there Eliphaz may have learnt from the Patriarch's wife what an uncompromising attitude of mind his old friend was showing ; for it is clear that her husband's mental condition was well known to her, from her question, Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity ? It is perhaps for this reason that Eliphaz seems to anticipate Job's reply to his impeachment, or it may be that he tries to soften the direct personal attack from motives of charity. At all events, he makes the doctrine that he has enunciated, that sin is the cause of calamity, applicable to all men, by the consideration that to be human is to be sinful :—

¹ iv, 7; v, 6.
66

OR, THE BOOK OF JOB

Shall mortal man be just before God ?
Shall a man be pure before his Maker ?
Behold he putteth no trust in his servants
And his angels he chargeth with folly.
How much more them that dwell in houses of clay,
Whose foundation is in the dust. . . .
Man is born unto trouble
As the sparks fly upward.¹

Therefore, he says, submit, repent :—

Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth ;
Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the
Almighty.
For he maketh sore, and bindeth up ;
He woundeth and his hands make whole.²

Such is the indictment to which Job must plead : that *whereas suffering is a proof of sin, therefore Job, being mortal and smitten by calamity, grief, and disease, has committed sin ; and whereas all men are sinners in God's sight, it is impious to protest innocence.*³ Eliphaz repeats this doctrine in his two other speeches, and it is common to the three of Bildad

¹ iv, 17-19 ; v, 7.

² v, 17-18.

³ There is a curious passage in Brooke's *Fool of Quality* that shows the persistence of this belief, as to disease. P. 322.

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and the three of Zophar; in fact, the Friends repeat each other and repeat themselves, and the delicate shades of difference between their arguments that ingenious commentators have fancied they could detect were hardly worth discovering. The challenge to the Patriarch's conscience, delivered by Eliphaz in his first speech, is maintained, essentially unaltered, throughout the poem; although, as the argument proceeds and the tension between the disputants increases, the accusation is expressed in various forms, culminating in Zophar's description of the miner and his operations, and the grand proverbial words :—

Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ;
And to depart from evil is understanding.¹

There is, as we shall see, a very sound and sufficient reason why the Friends should

¹ xxviii, 28. See *Psalms* cxi, 10, and *Proverbs* 1, 7, and viii–ix, 10. As already explained, I follow Professor Moulton's arrangement of speeches ("substantially that of Grätz"). In our Bible the whole of this speech is given to Job. The reasons for the correction are given in Professor Moulton's *Book of Job*, p. 125.

OR, THE BOOK OF JOB

not differ ; a natural compulsion that they should all say the same thing, which perhaps only a great poet would have perceived.

Job, of course, can give, and does give, a *Sac. (b).* direct denial to the imputation of wickedness. Well might he have exclaimed, in the words of the thirty-first Psalm : *Let the lying lips be put to silence, that cruelly, disdainfully, and despitefully speak against the righteous.* He is not conscious of any offence, either moral or ceremonial, either of commission or omission, and he therefore holds fast his integrity and refuses to plead to the God of truth falsely ; but he thoroughly understands that appearances are against him, according to the accepted theory of suffering ; that he cannot prove his innocence, and must meet the attack in another manner. The reasoning that he uses is not easy to disentangle from his passionate appeals to God, his cries of pain and his ravings of despair ; but though it may be true that “we must not expect from an ancient Oriental the dialectical forms and subtleties of the modern

ANSWER.
JOB'S PRE-LIMINARY

THE POET'S CHARTER

schools of the West,"¹ yet I defy any one to study Job—to live with him, so to speak, and to love him, as he is sure to do—without receiving the liveliest impression, not only of argument, but of skilful and logical argument; and therefore I consider that to dig out this reasoning from the passionate utterances in which it lies buried is most justifiable. I have, therefore, in the following quotations, used a very considerable latitude of arrangement, in order, if possible, to give Job's contention, as it seems to have been present to his own mind :—

Of a truth I know that it is so ;
But how can men be just before God ?

If he be pleased to contend with him,
He cannot answer him one of a thousand.

For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer
him,
That we should come together in judgment ;
There is no daysman betwixt us,
That might lay his hand upon us both.²

¹ Cox's *Commentary*, p. 89.

² *Daysman* simply means arbitrator.

OR, THE BOOK OF JOB

I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent :
I shall be condemned.

Why then do I labour in vain ?
If I wash myself with snow water,
And make my hands never so clean ;
Yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch,
And mine own clothes shall abhor me.

But now thou numberest my steps,
Dost thou not watch over my sin ?
My transgression is sealed up in a bag,
And thou fastenest up mine iniquity.¹

Am I a sea or a sea-monster,
That thou settest a watch over me ?

Thou huntest me as a lion,
And again thou shovest thyself marvellous upon me.
Thou renewest thy witnesses against me,
And increasest thine indignation upon me ;
Host after host is against me.
Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of
the womb ?

¹ “All the documents that go to prove his guilt are stored up in the scrip or pouch which hangs from the Judge’s belt, ready to be produced against him at the most opportune moment, and the proofs of his iniquity, i.e. of his most heinous offence, are even sewed up in an interior scrip, so anxious is the Judge not by any mischance to lose them, so bent on finding him guilty.”—Cox’s *Commentary*, p. 176. Renan’s Note is, however: “Letters and official documents are in the East enclosed in a bag and sealed up.”—*Op. cit.* p. 33.

THE POET'S CHARTER

Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress,
That thou shouldest despise the work of thine
hands ?

Thine hands have framed me,
And fashioned me together round about,
Yet thou dost destroy me.
Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast fashioned
me as clay ;
And wilt thou bring me into dust again ?¹

What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him,
And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him,
And that thou shouldest visit him every morning,
And try him every moment ?²

Man that is born of a woman
Is of few days and full of trouble ;
He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down ;
He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not.

¹ The famous stanzas of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám may be compared, concerning the Potter and the Pots.

² "He takes the words of an immortal Psalm, familiar to our ears, and, as it seems, to his, and turns them from a note of exultant praise to a wild wail of torture. *A bitter parody* is the forcible phrase of Dr. Cheyne."—Dean Bradley's *Lectures*, p. 68, and Note. See *Job and Solomon*, by Rev. T. K. Cheyne, p. 24. The approximate date of the composition of the poem is partly inferred from this quotation of Psalm viii.

OR, THE BOOK OF JOB

Seeing his days are determined,
The number of his months is with thee,
And thou hast appointed his bounds that he
cannot pass,

Look away from him that he may rest,
Till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.¹

Eliphaz, as we have seen, has proposed a dilemma which Job does not immediately try to solve. Bildad, who speaks next, merely repeats one part of it—

Doth God pervert judgment?
Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?²

And then Job begins his next speech with the words—

Of a truth I know that it is so:
But how can man be just before God?

It appears to me that this shows that he intends, first of all, to controvert that part of his Friend's argument, which asserts that all men are infected with original sin, and thereby liable to divine punishment. Like

¹ The passages, in order as quoted, are as follows:—
ix, 2–3, 32–33, 28–31; xiv, 16–17; vii, 12; x, 16–18; x, 3, 8–9; vii, 17–18; xiv, 1–2, 5–6.

² viii, 3.

THE POET'S CHARTER

a true logician, he accepts his friends' contention, only to show the untenable results to which it leads. You say, he tells them, that suffering is the punishment for sin ; that all men are sinful, and, therefore, all must suffer. It is true. How can man be just before God, *if God be pleased to contend with him ?* By such action God makes innocence impossible ; all labour in the path of virtue is useless ; nothing can keep or make a man clean if God choose to plunge him into the ditch of comparison with himself. Comparison is really out of the question ; and, if it were not, who is to judge ? Is it possible, he cries, appealing to God himself, that thou really hast treated me in this way ? scrutinising me so minutely that the detection of sin was rendered certain, and at the same time keeping the record of my transgressions secret ? Is it thy way to oppress and despise the work of thine hands ? Thou hast framed and fashioned me with that very sinfulness for which thou now chastisest me. The poor little ephemeral appearance that we call Man — of what importance can his

OR, THE BOOK OF JOB

thoughts, or words, or deeds be to thee?
Take, then, thine eyes off him ! Let him
do his day's work and be at peace.

Job's contention amounts to this—that *it is inconceivable that the Almighty should act in this tyrannical way, and therefore it must be conceded that some men at all events are, to all intents and purposes, righteous.*

The ground is now cleared for dealing *sec. (c).*
with the main proposition of the Friends,
that all calamity and suffering are the
punishment for sin ; that is to say, of sin
consciously committed, not merely the un-
avoidable frailty of human nature.

JOB'S PRINCIPAL
ANSWER.

If this be true, Job argues, the reverse
must be true also—that all wickedness in-
curs its appropriate penalty. In other words,
if suffering is attached to sin in the intimate
manner represented, there can be no sin
without consequent suffering.

His argument is framed in the following
fashion—

Wherefore do the wicked live,
Become old, yea, wax mighty in power ?
Their seed is established with them in their sight,
And their offspring before their eyes.

THE POET'S CHARTER

Their houses are safe from fear,
Neither is the rod of God upon them.
Their bull gendereth, and faileth not ;
 Their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf.
They send forth their little ones like a flock,
 And their children dance.
They sing to the timbrel and harp,
 And rejoice at the sound of the pipe.
They spend their days in prosperity,
 And in a moment they go down to Sheol.¹

Yet they said unto God, “ Depart from us,
For we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.
What is the Almighty that we should serve him ?
 And what profit should we have if we pray
unto him ?”

The tents of robbers prosper,
And they that provoke God are secure,
That bring their God in their hand.²

There are that remove the landmarks ;
 They violently take away flocks, and feed them.
They drive away the ass of the fatherless,
 They take the widow's ox for a pledge.
They turn the needy out of the way :

¹ The Place of Shades.

² “ The men who carry their god (their Eloah) in their hands are men who worship the sword with which they win their spoils, who regard it as the supreme power of the world, who have no god but *that*.”—Cox's *Commentary*, p. 159.

OR, THE BOOK OF JOB

The poor of the earth hide themselves together.
Behold, as wild asses in the desert they go forth to
their work,
Seeking diligently for meat ;
The wilderness yieldeth them food for their
children.

They cut his provender in the field,
And they glean the vintage of the wicked.
They lie all night naked without clothing ;
They have no covering in the cold.
They are wet with the showers of the moun-
tains,
And embrace the rock for want of a shelter.

There are that pluck the fatherless from the breast,
And take in pledge that which is on the poor,
So that they go about naked without clothing.

And being an-hungered they carry the sheaves ;
They make oil within the walls of these men ;
They tread their wine-presses, and suffer thirst.

From out of the populous city men groan,
And the soul of the wounded crieth out ;
Yet God imputeth it not for folly.

These are of them that rebel against the light ;
They know not the ways thereof,
Nor abide in the paths thereof.

The murderer riseth with the light ;
He killeth the poor and needy,
And in the night he is as a thief.

The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight,
Saying, No eye shall see me,
And he putteth a covering on his face.

THE POET'S CHARTER

In the dark they dig through houses ;
They shut themselves up in the daytime,
They know not the light.
For the morning is to all of them
As the shadow of death ;
For they know the terrors of the shadow of
death.¹

But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee ;
And the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee ;
Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee ;
And the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.
Who knoweth not in all these that “the hand of
the Lord hath wrought this ? ”²

¹ Professor Moulton's Commentary on this passage (commencing *There are that remove the landmarks*) is as follows : “The steps of social evolution are scientifically discriminated : (a) encroachment by removing boundaries on the common land ; (b) the consequent formation of a class sinking into hardship and poverty ; (c) the intensification of this hardship by close contact with wealth ; (d) next we have the crowding of population in cities, and the violence of city crime ; (e) finally, the rise of a distinctly criminal class, whose whole existence is a warfare against the light. In this way *the morning is to all of them as the shadow of death.*”—*Book of Job*, p. 161. In fact it is evident that Job did not regard criminals as the greatest sinners, but those who make them—namely, those who tyrannically acquire wealth or luxuriously and idly spend it.

² “Delitzsch makes the excellent suggestion that there is a proverb quoted here.” *Ibid*, p. 156.

OR, THE BOOK OF JOB

In whose hand is the soul of every living thing,
And the breath of all mankind.

The earth is given into the hand of the wicked.
He covereth the faces of the judges thereof.
If it be not He,
Who then is it?¹

The whole argument may be summarised thus : The assertion was made by Job's friends that all calamity and suffering are punishments for sin, and therefore, if an apparently righteous man is visited by any such plague, the reason is that either he has committed secret sin, or he is being chastised for innate sinfulness. But innate sinfulness implies that there is not and never can be a righteous man in the world, whereupon the whole question falls to the ground. But Job argues that it is inconceivable that a just Deity should expose men to the penalty of sin by demanding of them an impossible virtue, and therefore it is presumable that *some* righteous men exist. He then pro-

¹ The passages, in order as quoted, are as follows :—
xxi, 7-15 ; xii, 6 ; xxiv, 2-17 ; xii, 7-10 ; ix, 24.

THE POET'S CHARTER

ceeds to show that *if suffering be attached to sin, as effect to cause, sin must also be followed by suffering, as cause by effect; that is to say, that not only must sufferers be sinners, but sinners must invariably suffer.* But obviously and admittedly this is not so; wherefore it follows that neither are sufferers always sinners.

Sec. (d).
THE FRIENDS'
CLAIM OF
AUTHORITY.

As the argument proceeds, Job's friends gradually grow full of wrath; not so much with his reasoning as with his claim that he has a right to understand the mystery of suffering; in other words, that he has a right to search for God. His imprecation on the day of his birth, his invitation to death, and his renunciation of their doctrine that whatever is is right, all fill them with horror at his impiety. In their view he progresses from impatience to blasphemy, but to their repeated exhortations to submission he replies—

What is my strength that I should wait?
And what is mine end, that I should be patient?
Is my strength the strength of stones?
Or is my flesh of brass?
Is it not that I have no help in me,
And that sound wisdom is driven quite from me?

OR, THE BOOK OF JOB

Teach me and I will hold my peace ;
And cause me to understand wherein I have erred.
How forcible are words of uprightness !
But what doth your arguing reprove ?
Do ye imagine to reprove words ?
Seeing that the speeches of one that is desperate are
as wind ?

Therefore I will not refrain my mouth ;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit ;
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

Though I be righteous, mine own mouth shall condemn me ;
Though I be perfect, it shall prove me perverse.
Though I be perfect, I will not regard myself ;
I despise my life.
It is all one ; therefore I say,
He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.

My soul is weary of my life ;
I will give free course to my complaint ;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
I will say unto God, Do not condemn me ;
Show me wherefore thou contendest with me.

Oh that I knew where I might find him,
That I might come even to his seat !
I would order my cause before him,
And fill my mouth with arguments.
I would know the words which he would
answer me,
And understand what he would say unto me.

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Would he contend with me in the greatness of
his power ?

Nay, but he would give heed unto me.

There the upright might reason with him ;
So should I be delivered for ever from my
judge.

Surely I would speak to the Almighty,
And I desire to reason with God.

But ye are forgers of lies,

Ye are all physicians of no value.

Oh that ye would altogether hold your peace !
And it should be your wisdom.

Hear now my reasoning,
And hearken to the pleadings of my lips.

Will ye speak unrighteously for God,
And talk deceitfully for him ?

Will ye respect his person ?

Will ye contend for God ?

Is it good that he should search you out ?

Or as one deceiveth a man, will ye deceive him ?

He will surely reprove you,

If ye do secretly respect persons.

Shall not his excellency make you afraid,
And his dread fall upon you ?

Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes,
Your defences are defences of clay.

Hold your peace, let me alone that I may speak,
And let come on me what will.

At all adventures I will take my flesh in my teeth,
And put my life in mine hand.

Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him.

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As God liveth,
Who hath taken away my right,
And the Almighty,
Who hath vexed my soul,
All the while my breath is in me,
And the Spirit of God is in my nostrils,
Surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness,
Neither shall my tongue utter deceit.

God forbid that I should justify you ;
Till I die I will not put away mine integrity
from me ;

My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let
it go ;
My heart shall not reproach me, so long as
I live.

O earth, cover not thou my blood,
And let my cry have no resting place.
Even now, behold, my Witness is in heaven,
And He that voucheth for me is on high.
My friends scorn me,
But mine eye poureth out tears unto God,
That one might plead for a man with God,
As a son of man pleadeth for his neighbour.¹

I venture to place these passages together
and in this sequence, as fairly exhibiting Job's

¹ The passages, in order as quoted, are as follows :—
vi, 11–13, 24–26; **vii**, 11; **ix**, 20–22; **x**, 1–2; **xxiii**, 3–7; **xiii**, 3–15; **xxvi**, 2–6; **xvi**, 18–21.

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ascent of passionate argument, disembarrassed of the interruptings, the wranglings, the risings and fallings proper to the dramatic element of the poem. In the same way the position taken up by his friends may be shown as follows—

Should not the multitude of words be answered ?
And should a man full of talk be justified ?
Should thy boastings make men hold their peace ?
And when thou mockest, shall no man make
thee ashamed ?

For thou sayest, My doctrine is pure,
And I am clean in thine eyes.

But Oh that God would speak,
And open his lips against thee ;
And that he would show thee the secrets of
wisdom ;
For sound wisdom is manifold.

Know therefore that God exacteth of thee
Less than thine iniquity deserveth.

Canst thou by searching find out God ?
Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ?

It is high as heaven ;
What canst thou do ?
Deeper than Sheol ;
What canst thou know ?
The measure thereof is longer than the earth,
And broader than the sea.

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Is not God in the height of heaven ?
And behold the height of the stars, how high they are !
And thou sayest, “ What doth God know ?
Can he judge through the thick darkness ?
Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he
seeth not,
And he walketh in the circuit of heaven.”
Wilt thou keep the old way,
Which wicked men have trodden ?
Who were snatched away before their time,
Whose foundation was poured out as a stream ;
Who said unto God, Depart from us,
And, What can the Almighty do for us ?
Whence then cometh wisdom ?
And where is the place of understanding ?
Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living,
And kept close from the fowls of the air.
Destruction and Death say,
We have heard a rumour thereof with our ears.
God understandeth the way thereof,
And he knoweth the place thereof.

Art thou the first man that was born ?
Or wast thou brought forth before the hills ?
Hast thou heard the secret counsel of God ?
And dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself ?

What knowest thou, that we know not ?
What understandest thou, which is not in us ?
With us are both the gray-headed and the very aged
men,
Much elder than thy father.¹

¹ The passages, in order as quoted, are as follows :—
xi, 2–9 ; xxii, 12–17 ; xxviii, 20–23 ; xv, 7–10.

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Eliphaz is very subtle in the passage beginning, *Is not God in the height of Heaven?* "With the artifice and insincerity of a mere controversialist bent on victory, he puts into the mouth of Job himself the very words which Job has put into the mouth of the wicked, who say unto God, Depart from us, and what can the Almighty do for us?"¹ It is an attempt to prove that by not accepting the revelation of tradition regarding suffering, Job, in effect, relegates God to a state of indifference towards human affairs. What it really amounts to is this: that Job's rejection of his friend's authoritative knowledge of God's ways is tantamount to a rejection of God himself. *What understandest thou, says Eliphaz, which is not in us?* No wonder the afflicted patriarch cries scornfully—

No doubt but ye are the people,
And wisdom shall die with you.²

¹ Cox's *Commentary*, p. 321.

² XII, 2. Renan's *Translation* reads: "Truly you are the whole world," p. 27. *You think you are everybody* is our colloquial phrase.

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We have now come to the core of the disputation. No doubt the sufferings of Job in particular and of the human race in general were the occasion of it, but within that tangled controversy lies another more important. Eliphaz and his companions claim that the authority of tradition must outweigh all experience; that the revelation once made by God respecting his dealings with man is sufficient; and that it is the height of impiety to desire to know more. To their own question, *Where is the place of understanding?* they answer—

With us are both the gray-headed and the very ancient
men,
Much elder than thy father;

that is to say, that *Authority* is the place of understanding; that *Authority supplies a complete theoretic scheme of the world, and to that scheme every one must give his adhesion or undergo the penalty.*

But Job perceives plainly enough that they never would uphold this theory unless they believed that God sanctioned it. They

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will not use the faculties that God has bestowed upon them to investigate the phenomena of Man's existence. They simply repeat the formula that they think is pleasing to God. They regard themselves as God's advocates, and have no notion of the absurdity of their office. They hold a brief for Omnipotence, for of what use is it to hold one against it? They feel that God's eyes are upon them, observing whether they are on his side; ready to punish them, if they are not, and to reward them, if they are.

To the mind of Job *this* is impiety, *this* is blasphemy—

Will ye speak unrighteously for God (he cries),
And talk deceitfully for him?
Will ye respect his person?
Will ye contend for God?¹

There is nothing surely in the whole range of literature of deeper insight, of more wonderful penetration into the divine character than that sentence—

Will ye respect his person?

¹ xiii, 7-8.
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What room is there for the courtier in the presence of the King of Truth? Earthly monarchs may demand dissimulation; how can he who will judge them for demanding it, himself require it? What flattery can you bring *him*? How can you offer sacrifice on the altar of *his* vanity? His immeasurable greatness excludes the idea of homage. Robes and trappings are an insult to your Creator; you must appear before him naked; what can you bring to the Truth except the truth?

Unmeet to be profaned with praise
Is he whose coils the world enfold;
The God on whom I ever gaze,
The God I never once behold.¹

In fact, Job and his friends worship different Gods. They worship a despot who exacts a blind deference; he worships the *Spirit who invites Man to approach him*, and who, inasmuch as he made Man and is in Man, is himself both host and guest. Job yearns to know God better; while his

¹ *The Unknown God*, by William Watson. See *Collected Poems*, p. 291.

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friends fancy that they know everything about him that is to be known; among their superior information being the contradiction that his mysteries are inscrutable. At one time they give an explanation of evil; at another they call it a mystery. They are not entitled to do both, in order to meet the turn of the argument. But if they elect to regard evil as a mystery, and the investigation of it an impiety, still more must its *explanation* be impious; and thus they are condemned out of their own mouth. In fact, they set up an idol and attribute to it the qualities that correspond with their theory of the world; while Job worships he knows not whom, but worships him faithfully. This, I take it, is the real meaning of his answer to their question—

Doth God pervert judgment?
Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?

Yes, cries Job—

He hath subverted me in my cause,
And hath compassed me with his net.¹

¹ xix, 6. This answer does not follow immediately on the question. Perhaps the oriental mind worked

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For if this be taken in conjunction with his passionate assertion—

My Witness is in heaven
And He that voucheth for me is on high . . .
For I know that my Vindicator liveth,¹

we see that what it really amounts to is a declaration that *their God is not his God.*

The part that the friends played in his temptation to renounce God was to take the wrong side. They fancied they were God's champions—"orthodox liars for God," as S. T. Coleridge calls them²—when they were really Satan's abettors; and the reason of this was, as Hazlitt says, that "the consciousness of the presence of an all-powerful being, who is both the witness and judge of every thought, word, and action . . . forces the religious man to practise every mode of deceit upon himself."³

slowly, for over and over again Job's answers are only to be discovered by their relation to a previous passage marked by words repeated or by some phrase imitated.

¹ xvi, 19 and xix, 25.

² *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, pp. 36-37.

³ *The Round Table*, p. 193. I think this is taken from Kant.

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Even Plato is a victim of the same kind of reasoning : "If a poet writes about sufferings, or calamities, or disasters, he must find a theory to account for them, and must say that the sufferers were chastened for their profit, or that because the wicked are miserable they need chastisement and the infliction of it by the Gods is a benefit to them;"¹ that is, facts must be warped to square with a preconceived system of ethics, lest the morals of the people should suffer.

Well might Dean Stanley say that "the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, is the sin again and again repeated in the policy, half worldly, half religious, which has prevailed through large tracts of ecclesiastical history. . . . Many a time has the end been held to justify the means and the divine character been degraded by the pretence, or even the sincere desire of upholding a divine cause."² This is precisely the position of Job's friends. They suppose that God's

¹ *The Republic*, p. 69.

² *The Jewish Church*, vol. II, p. 239.

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cause, as against Job, is that submission and repentance please him, and that he exacts them from all men, while an obstinate desire to understand his dealings with men angers him. They do not perceive that this represents God's character as tyrannical. Happily for himself, Job did not renounce his God by accepting theirs, but continued to clamour for more knowledge of him and to crave for his presence; for thereby he was justified by God in the end.

The debate having worn itself out, Job *sec. (e).* rises, lifts up his hands, and takes what Professor Moulton calls the Oath of Clearing—a solemn protestation of his innocence. Then follow the harangues of Elihu, already alluded to, towards the close of which the Divine Intervention is ushered in by a thunder-storm; and the poem ends with a prose Epilogue, in which the Lord reprobates the three friends—*For ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath*—and rewards Job.¹

THE RE-
MAINDER OF
THE POEM.

One naturally, though foolishly (forgetting

¹ *XLII, 7 to end.*

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that it is in fact the poet who speaks), expects enlightenment from the deliverances of the divine voice addressing Job out of the tempest. But it is generally admitted that the theophany contributes nothing to the solution of the problem. Professor Moulton's eloquent explanation (I nearly wrote apology) should, however, be studied. He surmises that "the Deity of the divine intervention is not the God of judgment, but the soul of external nature . . . Infinite sympathy . . . and that his teaching is that the evil in the universe is not more mysterious than the good and great."¹

But "to justify the ways of God to men"² is perhaps the most monstrously absurd task ever undertaken by a mortal; implying, as it does, that the ways of God have been examined, classified, docketed, and registered. If Milton could have read that

¹ *The Book of Job*, pp. xxxv and xxxviii.

² *Paradise Lost*, Bk. 1, 26. Quoted by Pope in this form :—

"To vindicate the ways of God to man."
—*Essay on Man*, 16.

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magnificent *Natural Supernaturalism* of Carlyle, that Chapter viii of Book iii of *Sartor Resartus*, which stands out pre-eminent, glittering with the close-wrought gorgeousness of logical eloquence, he could never have written that line. Not only is man surrounded by mystery, he is himself a mystery; the child of mystery; the thrall of mystery; and the sacrificial victim of mystery. The mystery is one and indivisible. "We are," says Carlyle, "we know not what; light-sparkles floating in the aether of Deity . . . and nature, with its thousandfold production and destruction, is but the reflex of our own inward Force, the phantasy of our Dream, or what the earth-spirit in *Faust* named it, *the living visible garment of God*—

In Being's flood, in Action's storm
I walk and work above, beneath,
Work and weave in endless motion !

Birth and Death,
An infinite ocean ;
A seizing and giving
The fire of Living :

"Tis thus at the roaring Loom of Time I ply
And weave for God the garment thou seest him
by.

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Of twenty millions that have read and spouted this thunder-speech of the *Erd-Geist*, are there yet twenty units of us that have learned the meaning thereof?"¹

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.²

But what is this but to say that God is mystery? and if he were not, if he were comprehended by his creature, would he not instantly cease to be God?

Such is surely the meaning of the theophany in the *Book of Job*, without knowledge of which perhaps Carlyle's beautiful essay would never have been written. But man has got to live in the midst of this mystery, and eventually to die into it, and therefore, whatever name he chooses to give to that power "which is not himself," his problem is perforce to harmonise himself with it.

¹ *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. I, ch. viii.

² Lord Tennyson. *Poetical Works*, p. 240.

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Which is not himself! but how if it be himself? How if Humanity itself be the greatest revelation of that Power at present known to Humanity? How if all religion be only the tentative attempts of man to explain the divinity within him? If this be so, Man ought never to put himself into the absurd position of declaring that he understands himself or the world; while, on the other hand, he will ever seek for a continuance of the process by which a certain amount of understanding has been gained.

BOOK III
ARS HERETICA

M. May

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

FRANCIS BACON speaks in two different works of *Idola Fori*,¹ or phantoms of the market-place; by which we must suppose him to intend those names, expressions, habits, and modes of opinion, which inspire men with superstitious reverence, through their natural tendency to imitation and dread of singularity.

Among these *Idola* is a certain accepted artificiality of language, especially in vogue among those educated classes of society which most despise education; it is a kind of badge of brotherhood. Many instances might be collected; but perhaps one of the most striking examples is the constant employment of the word *divine*, the effect of

¹ *Advancement of Learning*, xiv, 11, and *Novum Organum*, i, 43.

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which, though not the intention, is to attribute even such things as dinners and dresses to the direct operation of the Spirit of the Universe. Even *poetae minimi* are great offenders in the use of this word, though they have the charming excuse of a handy rhyming syllable.

Some of this vulgar contempt for precision of language is of journalistic origin ; as, for instance, the reiteration in newspapers of the extremely technical term *evolution*, when all that is really intended is progress or merely progression.

Current phraseology is, in fact, hostile to the exact expression of thought, and something of its inadequacy attaches to the common employment of the word *Art*; first, because in ordinary parlance, it does not include Poetry, which, in my estimation, is its principal part ; and secondly, because many things are called artistic, which are mere artifice, or matter of taste and imitation ; or else are merely distant derivatives of Architecture or Painting.

For these reasons I should have preferred

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to have altogether avoided the use of the word in subsequent chapters. But it is impossible to banish large terms from the discussion of large subjects, and the word *Art*, however tiresome, is also indispensable.

But when everything is included, Comparison is excluded, and here as everywhere, Comparison is our only guide. If all productions of taste and skill, in all departments of life, are to be comprised in the term *Art*, then some other designation must be found for Poetry, Music, Sculpture, Architecture, and Painting; for otherwise the term ceases to be of any service as an instrument of Thought.

For purposes of lucid thought, Art ought to be held to imply only those forms of Sound, Shape, or Colour, which are capable of embodying an Idea or of transmitting the Image from the mind of the Maker (the meaning of the Greek word Poet) to the mind of the hearer or beholder.

Thus, in strict terminology, we must hold that the word *Art* cannot include the Inter-

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pretation of itself. The drama, for instance, was written for the purpose of being interpreted by men and women; had it been written to be performed by puppets it would have been written differently. "All good dramatists," says A. W. Schlegel, "have uniformly had the action in some degree present to their minds. . . . The speeches should be so framed that an intelligent actor could hardly fail to give them the proper action."¹ The Sonata or Symphony was written for the purpose of being transmitted by human agency to the ears of an audience. If it had been written to be played by a mechanical contrivance — say a gigantic musical-box — it would have been written differently. The playwright is none the less playwright and the composer is none the less composer, because the one looks to actors and actresses and the other to vocalists and instrumentalists, to give effect to their work; neither are the performers any the more dramatists or composers, because the author thus takes them into

¹ *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, p. 332.

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account. It may happen that in the case of a bad play the characters are so poorly delineated that the players are obliged to fill in the deficiencies, or it may happen that a moribund piece of music is electrified into life by the skill of the conductor; and in so far as this occurs players and conductor may be called creators or artists. But bad Art cannot make good terminology, and sincerity in choice of words may well go hand in hand with sincerity of praise for fine interpretation.

Moreover, if we would free our minds from nebulousities, it is not enough to define, at least within certain broad margins, the meaning of the word *Art*; we must also recognise within Art itself some valuable distinctions. If the proper business of Art be the transmission of an Idea from one mind to another, no vehicle has yet been discovered equal to language, and no form of language equal to Poetry. Again, though language is susceptible of deep study and fine management, it is not a gross and stubborn material, like that of paint and clay, nor is its technique

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conditioned by the powers of interpretation of wood and brass, of catgut and sheep-skin; wherefore its manipulation and its technique need not absorb the whole intellect and energy of the Artist, to the great detriment of the study and management of that ethereal material, that exquisite instrument, the Mind itself, from which all Art primarily proceeds. In a word, language is the direct expression of the mind, with no intervention except pen, ink, and paper, the use of which can be learnt in childhood; and therefore if the Poet steeps his mind in Poetry he merely dyes it with its own native element; there is no need, or at least no temptation, for him to subdue it to the Technique of the Senses. It is plain, therefore, that the rightful place of Poetry is at the head of all the Arts.

In such a matter individual taste goes for little. It may be that outward sight and sound appeal more to most people than the inward sight and sound communicated by Poetry; but if so, it is chiefly because most people expect Art to gratify their senses

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rather than to enlighten their understanding.

Whenever, therefore, I am compelled, by the exigencies of common speech, to use the word *Art*, I beg that it will be understood to include, first and principally, the Art of Poetry; and secondly, the handmaid of Poetry, Music.

CHAPTER II

THE CONSECRATION OF HERESY

AT this stage of our inquiry, it is perhaps wise to repeat once more that the real and eternal interest of the *Book of Job* lies in the conflict between Job and his Friends, the spiritual significance of which is of far deeper import than appears on the surface.

What great types, then, in the history of the world do Job and his friends represent? What constantly conflicting powers had the poet in his mind when he delineated their characters?

There can be no doubt about the friends. They have the two clear "stigmata" of their class—reiteration rather than argument, and the claim of complete and final knowledge. "It is only the head of the Popish Church who assumes the title of God's vice-regent upon earth, but the feeling is nearly common to all the oracular interpreters of the

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will of heaven."¹ So Job's would-be comforters deem themselves the delegates of God, the depositaries of the truth and the expositors of revelation, handed down to them from the beginning. Sometimes it has been convenient for the adherents of current theology, especially when confronted by science, to declare that religion has not had her last say; but this is exactly what Job contends and what his friends repudiate, since every religion professes finality until another supplants it—a process that must always take place, because the study of the eternal can never produce finality. Eliphaz and his companions represent in fact orthodox theology, the Church of their day, if you will; bound, therefore, all to say the same thing, to repeat it as if it were a charm, and to claim an absolute divine authority for saying it.

Job, on the other hand, has been very erroneously and absurdly called a sceptic.² He is in fact the opposite of a sceptic

¹ *The Round Table*, W. Hazlitt, pp. 194–195.

² *The Sceptics of the Old Testament*, by E. J. Dillon. Heine called the *Book of Job* the *Song of Songs of Scepticism*. See Prof. Cheyne's *Job and Solomon*, p. 104.

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—a heretic; the opposite, because the faith of honest heresy is more profound than the faith of orthodoxy, its function being to correct the errors of orthodoxy. Thus Job claimed a far greater faith than that of his friends, since he repudiated the idea of a God whose operation was not co-extensive with the world and its wonders.

All criticism of the *Book of Job* that fails to penetrate to the conclusion that Job was an arch-heretic fails in its function. Heresy is there included in the canon of Scripture, and is seen to be one of the sons of God, whose office it is to go forth and enlarge the view of Religion, which otherwise would be credited with a perfect comprehension of God. Socrates was a heretic, and drank the cup of hemlock for that cause. Jesus was a heretic, and the Jews crucified him for that cause. Every religion contains the seed of heresy, which presently will burst the husk and blossom into the flower of a new one; and if the religion was of God, so is the heresy. All things progress, and this is the progression of Religion.

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There is surely nothing in the Scriptures that surpasses the value of this revelation,—*the necessity and the sacredness of honest Heresy*. In spite of Dean Stanley's opinion, *this truth*, at all events, received from the Jewish race, far transcends in importance any received from the Greek, Roman, and Teutonic world.¹ “Wherefore do the wicked live? asks Job. . . . All through the *Book of Job* the question how this can be is over and over again asked and never answered. . . . The only solution reached is that of silence before the insoluble.”² That may be true, but *the right to ask* that question—nay, the righteousness of asking it—that is what is vindicated in the *Book of Job*; the right to seek God beyond the confines of traditional revelation; the right of humanity to revelation, rather than of religion; the right of God to reveal himself how, when, and where he will.

Prometheus, in the great tragedy of Aes-

¹ See *Jewish Church*, vol. II, p. 497.

² *Literature and Dogma*, by Matthew Arnold, pp. 51–52.

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chylus, has generally been acknowledged to be typical of Man himself—of the human race in the struggle for knowledge. Shelley, in the Preface to the *Prometheus Unbound*, declares that the only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus is Satan—the hero, as he calls him, of *Paradise Lost*. But surely such an analogy of characters is quite false, and greatly diminishes the range of interpretation. The Grecian theology (which we call mythology) had no place for a spirit of evil; the Satanic element was contained in Zeus himself. Their world stood on that elephant; but below the elephant was no tortoise, unless it was a very indistinct Fate, only invoked when Zeus had specially misbehaved himself. The fire which Prometheus filched from heaven could only have been stolen by the connivance of Zeus, supposing the Thunderer to have been omnipotent (as Shelley himself calls him). Hence Zeus was in effect Prometheus' tempter. He tempted him to the theft and then punished him for it. This closely resembles the story of the Tree of

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the knowledge of good and evil, and it becomes plain that Prometheus, like Adam, is an archetype of Humanity.

Adam, cast out of the garden into the wilderness ; Prometheus, cast out of heaven and riveted to a rock in the Caucasus ; Job, cast out of home and society and finding his only refuge on the common ash-heap, these martyrs in the cause of knowledge represent Humanity—the Kind—Man, as he has been and will be—thrown on to this dust-heap that we call Earth, a speck among the stupendous glories of the universe, expelled into the wilderness of the world, chained down to the laws of his being and the influence of his surroundings.

Martyrs in the cause of knowledge—yes, but of what knowledge? The knowledge of good and evil certainly did not lead to a greater intimacy with God ; it separated Adam from God ; and whatever interpretation we attach to the Promethean fire, it certainly did not signify knowledge of God, for Prometheus (in this respect possibly like Satan) considered that he knew all about the

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celestial tyrant and had nothing to learn. If Adam and Prometheus are types of Man, in his aspect of wresting from the unwilling hands of his Creator the means of becoming God-like, Job is a type of Man in a far sublimer sense. The ordeal through which he passed was devised with the express purpose of trying him, whether he would renounce God or continue to seek him. To wrestle with God till he blessed him was the task set him. It is the task set to every man that is born into the world.

The continuous search for God implies the continuous reformation of Religion ; and without heresy there can be no reformation. They are in fact the same thing from a different point of view. As soon as reformation is carried out, it ceases to be heresy, just as treason is no longer treason when it succeeds.¹

This principle is constantly demonstrated

¹ "Treason doth never prosper—what's the reason?
If it doth prosper none dare call it treason."

—Sir John Harrington. See *Lyra Elegantiarum*, p. 173.

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in the less important affairs of life. Thus it is vividly apparent in the history of our English “blank verse,” which was received with a storm of abuse;¹ and again in the history of the English stage, when Garrick’s innovations were execrated in a similar manner.²

But in the higher walks of heresy, the reformer is either persecuted or put to death ; the professors of the orthodox religion being not only chained to tradition, but conceiving themselves fettered to a God of tradition, who will punish them if they struggle to escape. This is, of course, exactly what they are not ; for if they understood the *Book of Job* they would know that religion is in bondage, not to a finite Discovery, but to an infinite Search. But the natural and passionate love of authority greatly prevails to make them take what is, in truth, the unreligious view of their office.

Thus, obeying this divine law of heresy,

¹ See *Blank Verse*, by J. A. Symonds, pp. 19–20.

² See J. Forster’s *Life and Times of Goldsmith*, p. 179, note, and p. 180.

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Jesus would have reformed the Jewish religion, broadening it out according to the ideal of many of its prophets, had not the Jewish ecclesiastics preferred to put him to death ; whereupon he became the founder of a new religion, subject in its turn to the same divine law. Precisely the same spirit exists among all churches at this moment, though they have no longer the power to work their will ; and it was never more clearly evinced than it was by the *Osservatore Romano*, the organ of the Pope, during the progress of the Dreyfus case, when it declared that a *Jew accused of treason must not hope for sympathy from Catholics !*

The *Book of Job* is, therefore, a tremendous stumbling-block to all Scribes and Pharisees, of whatever "persuasion." It is irrevocably included in the canon of authentic Scripture, though its position there seems almost a miracle, comparable to the inclusion, "in spite of its universality," of the *Book of Ezekiel*.¹ Jesuitically wise, from its own point of view, is the Roman Catholic Church, not

¹ Stanley's *Jewish Church*, vol. II, p. 487.

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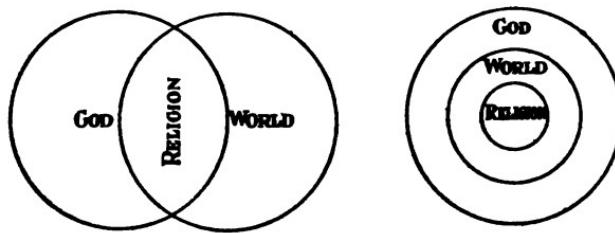
to admit the uninitiated to the study of the Old Testament. But the Protestant churches cannot without stultification bury their heads in the sand. They owe their existence to Reformation, and are bound by the terms of their charter, which is in reality an appeal to the reason of Humanity as against the emotion of Religion. They must submit to continuous reformation, on pain of supersession or destruction; they have cut away from under their own feet the firm foundation of ignorance.

For this truth also, the greatest of all, is contained in the *Book of Job*—that Humanity itself, not Religion, is the Revelation of God, and that the very instinct of Man to expect more revelation is itself a revelation of the divine will. Religion cannot explain Man, for the simple reason that Religion is Man's own invention; one might almost say it is a portion of human Art. It is none the less sacred, if Man himself was made by God, or proceeded or emanated from God, however remotely. But it must take the second place. As the Sabbath was made for Man, not Man

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for the Sabbath, so Religion was made for Man, not Man for Religion. Holy Scripture is the record of man's experiences of God, but the only Bible that God ever wrote is Man himself. "Well said St. Chrysostom with his lips of gold" (cries Carlyle): "The true SHEKINAH is man; where else is the GOD'S-PRESENCE manifested, not to our eyes only but to our hearts, as in our fellow man?"¹

The view that the poet of the *Book of Job* took of the world and the view that Religion takes may be demonstrated by diagram:—



On the left, which is Religion's view of itself, we see God intersecting a portion of the world by his influence, the segment of the

¹ *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. i, Ch. x. See also the fine passage in *Heroes and Hero Worship*, p. 10.

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world so intersected being known by the name of Religion, while the greater portion of the world remains outside Religion, and therefore, by hypothesis, outside the compass and operation of God, being full of profanities and heresies which religion repudiates. On the right side, which is the poet's view of Religion, we see Religion included in the world, as part of its phenomena, and both of them surrounded and permeated by God.

In a word, the tendency of all Religion is self-worship. Forgetting that God made the world, and remembering, as it fancies, that he made Religion, it bows down to the idol of itself, and on its own altar immolates its own divine faculty of reason.

CHAPTER III

THE CONSECRATION OF POETRY

NOT only does Heresy receive consecration by the mouth of Job, but Poetry, the greatest and most difficult of all the Arts, speaks through his lips, as the servant of God, holding the divine commission to enlarge and reform Religion by pointing out new methods in the search for God and the study of his ways.

“The Religions of all Nations are derived from each nation’s different reception of the Poetic Genius which is everywhere called the spirit of prophecy.” So cries our English prophet-poet, heading his utterances with the words: “The Voice of one crying in the Wilderness,”¹ as well he may; for profoundly true as the assertion is, it is not at

¹ *There is no Natural Religion*, Works of William Blake, vol. iii, p. 101.

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all likely to be received with gratitude by doctrinal Religion ; since it obviously carries with it the farther truth, that poets possess the right, and are possessed by the inherent impulse to correct, amplify, and supplement Religion, eternally preventing it from becoming a Select Seminary for Saved Souls.

Objection may possibly be taken that there are such things as sacred Poetry and sacred Art, and that the Church of the Middle Ages was the guardian and preserver of them. But poetry is universal ; the only really Catholic Church is the Church of Art. There is nothing the poet must not know ; no country that is not his province. The famous saying of Marcus Aurelius is not only applicable to him, but if there be any knowledge that is *not* human he must know that also. To do one thing supremely well, the poet must know everything. Religion, as it has hitherto existed on earth, is only one branch of knowledge. The universal knowledge arrogated by its votaries is contradicted even by themselves ; for what have they to say when confronted

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by Job and his miseries? But by virtue of its universality, Poetry recognises that "he who is out of the Church and opposes it is no less an agent of religion than he who is in it; to be an error and to be cast out is part of God's design."¹

The words would cover, of course, the case of the sceptic, but perhaps Blake was of opinion that sceptics deceive themselves; that they, too, would be among the seekers after God were it not that, right in their path, they encounter the grotesque caricature of him designed by theology, and tilt against this windmill, fancying it is the real giant.

Nor am I unmindful that there is a great deal of inferior and spurious Poetry. So there is of Religion, for that matter; but I repeat and reaffirm that one of the highest functions of the poet is to reform theology by enlarging the idea of God and making it more proportionate to the marvels and mysteries of the world in which we live, and most of all to the human spirit itself. The

¹ *Selections from Blake*, p. 251.

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five measures of meal of Religion have never contained the leaven of Science ; the so-called attacks of Science have always come from without ; nor was the late Professor Drummond's attempt to change this order, by introducing Natural Law into the Spiritual World, successful. Wherever there is a relation between two things it is always easy to represent it topsy-turvy ; and it is evident that a material interpretation of spirit is nothing more than a spiritual interpretation of matter, upside down. The leaven contained in Religion is that of Poetry, which is destined ever and anon to permeate it, till the whole is leavened.

The speaker of the very words I have paraphrased was himself a poet. What beauty of philosophy was in his utterances ! What an exquisite discourse is the Sermon on the Mount ! What unsurpassed pathos and beauty are there in the lament over Jerusalem ! Suppose his teaching had been given to the world in a form like that of the Thirty-nine Articles—even if he had laid down his life for the sake of

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it, could it have sown the world with new ideas of God? Or suppose our translators had rendered it into precise, unbalanced, unsonorous diction, could it have taken hold on men's hearts as it has? Jesus had the mind of a great poet, full of intellectual passion, clear imagination, and calm logic, and that is why his God of Love burst the bonds of Judaism and took possession of the people.

But does any one fancy that if Jesus were on earth now he would have nothing more to say on the subject? Did he then exhaust it? Exhaust God? exhaust the Infinite? How is that possible? Yet this is what the Christian churches apparently assume. Having had a new clue to God delivered into their hands, they seek for no other, though the clues are both endless and innumerable, but soon begin to worship themselves, puffed up with the favour shown them, and the dignity of their trusteeship. It is as true of the Christian religion as it was of the religion of Numa—its adherents are “seldom challenged by its prayers and

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ceremonies to any ponderings on the divine nature; they conceive them rather to be the appointed means of setting such troublesome movements at rest."¹

¹ *Marius the Epicurean*, by Walter Pater, vol. 1,
pp. 8-9.

BOOK IV
THE POET A SEEKER AFTER GOD

CHAPTER I

AS THE PROPHET OF JOY

THE poet, working for Humanity and accredited for ever by the *Book of Job* as one of God's commissioners on earth, seeks knowledge of his Master, not only in the mystery of suffering, but in the mystery of joy.

"We may safely say," avers Matthew Arnold (quoting St. Augustine, Pascal, Barrow, and Butler), "that joy and happiness are the magnets round which human life irresistibly moves."¹

This is no philosophical postulate intended to bear the superincumbent weight of a vast system of ethics; it is a simple truth. To whom does it not apply? False ideas of joy there are in plenty; but happy-

¹ *God and the Bible*, pp. 93-94.

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ness, either here or hereafter, who does not seek? What encourages any human being to go on living — even the veriest wretch who has a crust of bread to-day and knows not if he will have another to-morrow—except the chance of some moments of joy? Or what is the cause of suicide, except the insupportable conviction that such moments are over for ever?

And yet with all the expectation, how little joy there is!

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
A mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.¹

Is not this perfectly true? How seldom do we meet a really joyous person, and how often does intimacy reveal secret springs of sorrow in those who appear gay! One may meet a man or woman merry with this or that special excitement; but a man or woman that possesses the spirit of joy, who ever found?

¹ *Selections from Blake*, p. 91.

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Of course religious persons answer that the world is too sad; that they strive against sin and misery; that they copy their Master, the Man of Sorrows; imitating even in that respect the Christ who came to gladden the world.

True, the world is sad; but how is it that they have not yet redeemed it from its sadness? What teaching is theirs, or what power is theirs, or what divine influence is theirs, that they cannot yet impress the world with a sense of their own supreme insight into glory? Can they believe that Jesus taught, suffered, and died in order to make the world sadder? Yet is not modern life as sad as the life of the ancient Romans or Greeks?

I do not write in the spirit of scorn or scoffing, but I ask questions in the spirit of Job. Why should I, more than he, speak unrighteously for God and talk deceitfully for him? Why should I respect his person or contend for him? As one that deceiveth a man, will I deceive him? He would surely reprove me, if I secretly respect

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persons. Shall not his excellency make me afraid and his dread fall upon me?

I say that Christianity is not a cause of joy in the world. It may be (accompanied generally with temporal benefits) a cause of consolation to the aged and the sick; but to the young and healthy it is more often the cause of depression and morbid introspection. I say that it has failed to touch the secret sources of sorrow from which the world at large suffers.

“Primitively it was glad and artistic. The angel of righteousness, says the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the most characteristic religious book of that age — its *Pilgrim's Progress* — the angel of righteousness is modest and delicate and sweet and quiet. Take from thyself grief, for (as Hamlet will one day discover) 'tis the sister of doubt and ill-temper. Grief is more evil than any other spirit of evil, and is more dreadful to the servants of God, and beyond all spirits destroyeth man. For as when good news is come to one in grief straightway he forgetteth his former grief, and no longer attendeth to anything except

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the good news which he hath heard, so do ye also ! having received a renewal of your soul through the beholding of these good things. Put on therefore gladness, that hath always favour before God and is acceptable unto him, and delight thyself in it, for every man that is glad doeth the things that are good, and thinketh good thoughts, despising grief.”¹ And surely, if we consider what are the pretensions of the Christian religion, one might suppose that its votaries would be singing in the exuberance of their mirth the whole day long. God manifested, the world redeemed, life and immortality brought to light, constant communion with the Spirit of Comfort, and a sure and certain hope of unending bliss after death ! What language, what music, can adequately give expression to the ecstasy of the people who believe these things ?

Yet the controversy between the Owl and the Nightingale remains as applicable to our own day as it was to the time of Edward I,

¹ *Marius the Epicurean*, by Walter Pater, vol. II,
pp. 125-126.

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in the early part of whose reign this curious poem was composed. “A nightingale, sitting on a bough covered with blossom, perceives close by her an owl on an old stock, and forthwith begins to abuse him for his general habits and his appearance. . . . They proceed to fight it out in good set terms and in alternate speeches, the nightingale’s main attack being directed against the owl’s ill-omened song, and dark and solitary habits ; while the owl dwells on the idle singing of his adversary, and on all the evils that flow from it. Upon this latter point the nightingale is ready with her defence :—

Owl, thou askest me, she said, if I can do anything else but sing in the summer time, and bring bliss far and wide. Why askest thou of my skill? Better is my one than thy all. Better is one song of my mouth than all that ever thy kind knoweth ; and list, I tell thee wherefore : Knowest thou for what man was born ? For the rich bliss of heaven, where there is ever song and mirth in like manner. Thither goeth every man that knows anything of good. There-

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fore men sing in Holy Church, and clerks begin the work of song that man may think by means of that song whither he must go, and where he shall be for long, so that he shall not be forgetful of that mirth, and may think thereof and profit by it, and take heed of the voice of the Church, how merry is the bliss of heaven.

The owl, however, is not to be beaten :—

Thou sayest that thou singest to mankind, and teachest them that they go hence up to the song that lasts for ever ; but it is of all wonders the greatest that thou darest lie so openly. Thinkest thou so easily to bring them to God's kingdom all singing ? Nay, nay ! they shall certainly find that it is with long weeping that they must pray for a remedy for their sins before they can ever come there. I counsel thee that men be ready, and rather weep than sing, who go to the King of Heaven ; since there is no man without sin. Therefore he must, ere he go hence, with tears and with weeping pray that that may be bitter to him which once was sweet. Thereto I help, God knows,

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nor do I sing to men any foolishness. For all my song is of longing, mingled sometime with wailing, that man, by means of me, may bethink him to be sorrowful for his wicked deeds. With my songs I urge him to be sorry for his sins."¹

Thus in this ancient fashion is set forth the gospel of joy and the gospel of sorrow, and once more we hear Man claiming by his Poetry to rectify his Religion.

For, in good sooth, what is this joy that is so lacking to Religion? It is not *pleasure* that we are considering at all. Pleasures are merely toys, fit for those who remain all their lives children; though, do what they will, unless they are positively idiotic, they cannot avoid growing into the craving for something more than rattles and dolls and painted bladders.)

The use of language is to express distinctions, not to confuse differences, and the need of distinction in this instance has

¹ Courthope's *History of English Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 132, and the paraphrases given in the notes, pp. 132-134, from Wright's *Early English Poetry*.

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largely diminished the force of some of the greatest works of Art, unconsciously influenced by the false view that Religion takes of joy. Striking examples of this are to be found in Wagner's operas of *Tannhäuser* and *Parsifal*. Venus and the houris of Klingsor's Garden are beings as alluring to a man of true imaginative intellect as an Aunt Sally on a stick. To spend existence with a painted mop may seem attractive to a boy fresh from the whispered secrets of his elder brother, but a true man knows and appreciates the difference between shallow pleasure and fathomless joy, and to them comes home the truth of Mr. William Watson's lines on Byron—

Too avid of earth's bliss, he was of those
Whom Delight flies because they give her chase ;
Only the odour of her wild hair blows
Back in their faces hungering for her face.¹

But joy is only fathomless because the mind is fathomless, and because it is in the mind that the joy dwells : the work of the senses

¹ *Collected Poems*, p. 110.

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being both to express the inward and spiritual joy, and to restore and replenish the mind. Nothing can deprive men and women of joy if they once possess it ; for they bear it about with them ; though, in love, they choose to hazard some of it into another's keeping.

CHAPTER II

AS THE PROPHET OF LOVE

NOT only is the Poet the bearer of glad tidings of great Joy in general, but of the Joy of Love in particular.

In spite of a just appreciation of the value of Christianity, as a stage in the development of the human mind, and of the special value of Christian Chivalry in the Middle Ages, in its production of a nobler ideal of the sexual relation of men and women,¹ it seems to me, nevertheless, incontrovertible that Christian thought has always been more

¹ I am not well acquainted with the history of Chivalry, but from my knowledge of the Old French Romances I am strongly inclined to think that the religious Sanction of the love element in Chivalry was more in the nature of a concession to human weakness than a Consecration of Sex. None but "virgin knights" could achieve the Holy Grail.

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or less at variance with poetic thought, on the subject of the universal instinct of Love.

The difference may, perhaps, be stated thus: That while the Poets have always regarded Sex as sacred and Love as divine, the Churches have regarded them as carnal and profane in themselves, and apart from prescribed sanctification; or, in other words, while Poetry has eulogised Love, as a blessing and benefit to the world, Religion has disparaged it, as an obstacle to the spiritual life; or, again, in another form,—whereas Poetry has taught that the joy of Love ministers to the passion of the soul, Religion has maintained that the passion of the soul is destroyed by the joy of Love.

“It was a favourite opinion among the Fathers,” says Westermarck, “that if Adam had preserved his obedience to his Creator he would have lived for ever in a state of virgin purity, and that some harmless mode of vegetation¹ might have peopled Paradise with a race of innocent and immortal

¹ The word intended is probably “germination.”

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beings";¹ which opinion was afterwards echoed as a "melancholy *utinam*" by Sir Thomas Browne, who wished that men and women might "procreate like trees, without conjunction."²

The sturdy sense and sane imagination of Milton, however, represented Adam and Eve as living, even before the Fall, in the bonds of connubial love.³ Nevertheless, the shame of sex—the woman's fear of the man, and the man's fear of the woman—is common at the present day among persons of a religious temperament.

In a word, the ancient doctrine of Manicheism is far from obsolete. Consciously or unconsciously, the great majority of Christians are actuated by it, or at least by part of it. If they do not definitely believe in the duality of God, they certainly believe in the duality of Man; so strangely do certain effete particles, that one would fancy must long ago have been shaken from the mind

¹ *The History of Human Marriage*, pp. 154-155.

² *Religio Medici*, p. 93.

³ *Paradise Lost*, Bk. iv.

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of Humanity, in his impetuous course down “the ringing grooves of change,” adhere still, and are borne into ages to which they do not belong.

Scc. (a).
MANICHEISM.

Mr. E. H. Coleridge, in his notes to Byron's Preface to *Cain*, says: “The Manicheans (the disciples of Mani or Manes, third century A.D.) held that there were two co- eternal creators—a god of darkness who made the body and a god of light who was responsible for the soul—and that it was the aim and function of the good spirit to rescue the soul, the spiritual part of man, from the possession and grasp of the body, which had been created by and was in the possession of the spirit of evil. St. Augustine passed through a stage of Manicheism, and in after life exposed and refuted the heretical tenets which he had advocated, and with which he was familiar.”¹ This explanation of the world was, however, far more ancient. “The old legends of dualism,” says Professor Draper, “became known to the Jews during their Babylonian captivity.” But the con-

¹ *The Works of Lord Byron*, vol. v, p. 209, note 2.

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trary explanation was known also: "At the time of the Macedonian expedition, Persia recognised one universal intelligence, the creator, preserver and governor of all things, the most holy essence of all truth, the giver of all good."¹

This was the monotheism of Zoroaster; who is perhaps represented in the Spanish Chapel at Florence, sitting at the feet of Astronomy and gazing up at the stars.

"Spirit and matter," writes Mr. Pater, "have for the most part been opposed, with a false contrast or antagonism, by schoolmen whose artificial creations those abstractions really are. In our actual concrete experience, the two trains of phenomena, which the words matter and spirit do but roughly distinguish, play inextricably into each other. Practically the Church of the Middle Age, by its aesthetic worship, its sacramentalism, its real faith in the resurrection of the flesh, had set itself against that Manichean opposition of spirit and matter and its results in

¹ *Conflict of Religion and Science*, p. 15.

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men's way of taking life; and in this Dante is the central representative of its spirit.”¹

It is clear, however, that there is no longer a consensus of opinion concerning the resurrection of the flesh, at least in the English Church. Thus Dean Stanley, speaking of the clause in the Apostles' creed, says: “This clause conveys the belief so emphatically contradicted by St. Paul (*1 Cor. xv, 35, 36, 50*) of the resurrection of the corporeal frame. It has been softened in the modern rendering into the Resurrection of the Body . . . but in the Baptismal Service the original clause is presented in its peculiarly offensive form.”²

Perhaps our philosopher poet, Robert Browning, best hits the point, in the problem of the apparent duality of Man—

Let us not always say,—
Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now than flesh
helps soul.

¹ *Appreciations*, pp. 220–221.

² *Christian Institutions*, p. 335, note 2.

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As Mr. Ashcroft Noble truly observes (after quoting the above verse) : "The idea, as it appears in numerous poems of Browning may be briefly stated thus: Man is a being created for two lives, a finite life and an infinite life, and if he will live wisely he will neither ignore the latter in the enjoyment of the former nor commit the opposite error of attempting to snatch at the fulness of the infinite life while yet subject to the bonds of the finite—to crowd into Time Eternity's concern."¹ He also points out that Browning's forerunner in this thought was Pope—

'Tis thus the Mercury of Man is fixed ;
Strong grows the Virtue with his nature mixed ;
The dross cements what else were too refined
And in one interest body acts with mind ;
The surest Virtues thus from Passions shoot
Wild Nature's vigour working at the root.²

Nor must we forget Blake: "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul, for that called Body is a portion of Soul discerned

¹ *The Sonnet in England*, pp. 141-142.

² *Ibid.* p. 145. The lines occur in *The Essay on Man*, Epistle II, 177-184.

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by the five senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.”¹ This is surely as good an account of the mystery of life as any other, and practically it all comes to this, that attempts to rend asunder soul and body result in injury to both, no matter whether the soul struggles to separate, or the body. “There must be Desire, that Reason may have ideas to build on.”² Whether the body be contumacious and give the soul no ideas, or whether the soul, led away by prejudice, refuse to accept ideas from the body, the end is disaster.

“Deepest of all illusory appearances,” says Carlyle, “for hiding Wonder, as for many other ends, are your two grand fundamental world-enveloping Appearances, SPACE and TIME. These, as spun and woven for us from before the birth itself, to clothe our celestial Me for dwelling here, and yet to blind it, lie all-embracing, as the universal canvas, or warp and woof, whereby all minor

¹ *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. See *Selections*, p. 153.

² *Ibid*, p. 154.

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Illusions in this Phantasm Existence weave
and paint themselves. In vain while here
on Earth shall you endeavour to strip them
off ; you can at best but rend them asunder
for moments, and look through.”¹

Yet, as Hinton tells us, there is no reason
why an illusion should be an error. Time
is the mode and means whereby eternity is
presented to us ; it gives us a ratio by which
we perceive eternity ; it is a measuring-rod
by the use of which we are taught that we
live in the measureless. In exactly the same
way matter is also an illusion, seeing that
the lapse of matter is the constant source of
the illusion of the lapse of time ; but it is
the means and mode by which spirit is pre-
sented to us. It supplies the mind with
phenomena on which to exercise the sense
of comparison, which is its proper function,
and which gives rise to those proportions
and relations on which all art and science
depend.

But all things centre in the brain. The
body itself is full of illusions ; all sensation

¹ *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. III, p. 244.

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is in the brain, and its localisation in other parts of the body is an illusion of the senses. There is no human energy that is not cerebral.

The body itself is an illusion, including its material brain—a truth the sadness of which we realise when we stand beside some beloved form, once actuated by the brain, but now become Nothing—a husk that belongs to the great dust-heap of Nature—soon to become invisible, intangible, imperceptible.

There is, however, a glory as well as a sadness surrounding life and death. We may well assume that a merely material brain could never imagine anything but matter. “None could have other than natural or organic thoughts if he had none but organic perceptions.”¹ The fact that we are able to imagine spirit and eternity (though unable to comprehend them) affords at least a presumption that thought is not a product of mere cerebral matter, but of cerebral matter energised by spirit.

¹ *Natural Religion.* See *Selections*, p. 175.

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It is not, however, to be expected that the Mind should be able to understand itself, any more than a man can carry himself. We can use no energy superior to the mind by which to consider or examine it. Such inspection is itself only a reflection of Mind, like a face in a glass ; it is not, and cannot be, an explanation, for which the necessary higher Intelligence is lacking.

If, therefore, we can conceive Man as a spirit expressed in terms of a body (in order, perhaps, that, through another mode of life, spirit may be able to contemplate itself), it follows that all the functions of the body are spiritual, except those that are necessary only to keep the body alive ; and of all these functions, surely that which induces spirit to seek spirit—man to seek woman, and woman to seek man—and to live in the most intimate commerce and communion with each other, must be the most spiritual.

Moreover, though the spirituality of Love may be hidden from the savage by the illusion of the body, and from those who, though living in the midst of civilisation, are

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nevertheless still savages, yet (to paraphrase the words of St. Paul) the Body is the Schoolmaster to bring us to Spirit. The passion of the body produces the passion of the mind, if not always in the individual, yet always in the race; and from the passionate mind springs the compassionate mind,—the intellect of imaginative tolerance and comprehension,—whereof if more existed in the world, the world would be far other than it is.

Sec. (b).
THE INFLUENCE
OR LOVE ON
HUMAN
EVOLUTION.

Metaphysics can always be met by metaphysics, but the beneficent effect of the instinct of Love on the human race is no mystical fancy, but a scientific fact, depending on the law of Natural Selection.

Examined scientifically, the instinct of Love is found to be not only the cause of Man's development from an animal state into a god-like state, but the source of the best and larger part of all the joy that there is in the world.

As already observed, the desire for joy is common to all men, and plays a great part in determining their destinies. We may

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take it that it was this desire that caused men to discover that the joy of life was greatly enhanced by treating their women kindly ; in other words, that where affection, as well as necessity, was the occasion of a man's union with a woman, the resulting condition was far happier.

From this a second discovery proceeded as civilisation advanced—namely, that “affection depends in a very high degree upon sympathy. Though distinct aptitudes, these two classes of emotions are most intimately connected ; affection is strengthened by sympathy and sympathy by affection. Community of interests, opinions, sentiments, culture, and mode of life, as being essential to close sympathy, are therefore favourable to warm affection. . . . When affection came to play a more prominent part in human sexual selection, higher regard was paid to intellectual, emotional, and moral qualities through which the feeling was chiefly provoked.”¹

¹ Westermarck's *History of Human Marriage*, pp. 361–362.

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From the desire, then, of increased joy, by means of Love, has resulted a large proportion of the best and most spiritual blessings of life, to say nothing of the astonishing change thus produced in the position of women, who, for the same reason, "are no longer shut up like an exotic plant in a greenhouse, but allowed to associate freely with men; while the preference given to higher qualities by civilised men contributes much to the mental improvement of race."¹

But may we not go much farther than this, and rightly attribute all affection to sexual origin? Apart from the obvious source of the mother's delight in her child (especially when accompanied by the pleasure of suckling) how else could it have entered into the heart of man to love any one but himself? How should he learn to love his neighbour, except by the unavoidable necessity laid upon him of loving a woman? Surely what appeared to be a mere physical law contained the germ of the highest spiri-

¹ Westermarck's *History of Human Marriage*, pp. 361-362.

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tual altruism, and a creature that first felt the need of fulfilling a female life, in order to fulfil his own, was the ancestor of all those who fulfil their own lives by making others happier.

But to this divine process the element of joy is essential. For if the earth were now inhabited by the descendants of vegetable ancestors, according to "the favourite opinion of the Fathers," what could they be (without stopping to inquire what awful kind of gigantic insect was to fertilise them), what could they be, but the same anthropomorphic flowers as their primal progenitors? What possible evolution could have taken place with them, except in colour and shape? It is the joy of sex, the very thing that excites the envy and conscious fear of the ecclesiastic, which generates the charity that he preaches and the intellect that he despises.

Religion has no vision of the vast terrestrial *Sec. (e).*
destiny of Man, but is always expecting a "*Purity.*" catastrophe that shall justify all her errors; and hence she misses the divine significance of Love.

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But that which has taken place in the past may take place in the future. Love certainly has not had his final say, whatever Religion may have done. *Your ways are not my ways* has ever new meanings as the centuries gather. Man fancies he is going his own way, while he is going God's. As the joy of love increases, by bringing into its field the satisfaction of intellect, so will it be perceived that God did not curse man with sex, but blessed him.

We have seen how love makes for the progress of the human race in all those things that are more excellent. It follows, of course, that Love itself always tends to become more noble. But this takes place by no means because it tends to become less passionate; on the contrary, its worth and beauty increase in the ratio of its demand for joy. The amorous man—that is, the man whose idea of the joy of Love is easily contented—is on a very much lower scale than he whose love aspirations are only to be satisfied, if at all, with difficulty. Religion is always utterly astray here. She always

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clearly regards the men of pleasure, the Tannhäuser, as enjoying themselves supremely, for the time being, and as, so far, enviable. The only thing that damns their bliss in her eyes is their omission to bow down and worship her idol of Marriage. They dare to regale themselves at the feast without saying grace ; that is the real reason why she bans them with candle and book. She resents their offence against her ceremonial law, and the religious atavism is often so strong in the transgressors themselves, that this omission is the secret spring of hyssop in their cup that spoils even its temporary sweetness. But could the incense-blinded eyes of Religion pierce to the heart of the matter, she would perceive that Tannhäuser is to be pitied, not because he has so much pleasure, but because he has so little. Weak passion lightly and easily dissipates itself ; strong passion is conservative of its energies. The truly passionate nature cries out for a joy that is rare upon earth and perhaps does not exist, or does not yet exist, since love may be said to be still in its

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infancy,¹ and this lofty, exacting, and intense passion is the only purity possible, either for men or women. Only those who possess it (to use Walter Pater's fine phrase) "pray to be saved from offences against their own affections."² The ideally perfect union between a man and a woman implies an absolute emancipation from consciousness of sin. Dual sin ceases where there is unity; and two creatures, so united, are surely in the sight of God one being; in whose spiritual glory of coalescence he may perhaps take a delight, walking about his garden in the cool of the evening, as we take a delight in the sex-caused beauty of the flowers.

The search for such a union cannot be anything but pure; but only a truly passionate nature ever undertakes it; only the most passionate imagination knows how to put out the fire of Lust with the sunshine of Love. This great truth though hidden

¹ See Courthope's *History of English Poetry*, vol. 1, pp. 117-118.

² *Marius the Epicurean*, vol. 1, p. 45.

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away from Religion, like a star in the abyss of space, is well known to poets and philosophers. The lonely soul of Shelley, crying out for such a union, exclaims—

The wells
Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
The fountains of our deepest life shall be
Confused in passion's golden purity ;¹

and Professor Seeley said : “No heart is pure that is not passionate.”² But the doctrine of *purity* has been a great obstacle to the understanding of this great principle. Religion never did a better day’s work for herself than when she first used it, in the long and bitter controversy that she has waged with Humanity concerning Love. It may not have been an invention of deliberate moral hypocrisy, though the deadly error that anything in the nature of a lie can possibly produce anything in the nature of a truth is not confined to Religion, but appears from time

¹ *Epipsychedion*, 568–571.

² Quoted by Mr. Ashcroft Noble in *The Sonnet in England*, p. 144. The idea expressed in *Tom Jones* (a most moral book) is the same. See vol. II, p. 471.

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to time in the press, as the following astounding passage will show: "The licentiousness of France has existed always . . . and is due . . . to one of her worst and one of her best qualities,—a salaciousness which the Romans noticed, and a dislike of all that is hypocritical, *even when the hypocrisy is beneficial to morals;*"¹ but, at all events, it served to obscure the issue, whereby Religion retained her authority over the resulting confusion. For surely it is "in the nature of a lie." Sex may be virgin; it cannot be pure; that is to say, it cannot be pure in the religious sense of negation, of inertia. Sex cannot be negatived; and it can only be pure in the sense that an honest passion, which imbues the mind with noble thoughts and happy sentiments, gives the mind an ascendancy over the senses that no devotee of virginity can ever attain. Purity has a fine sound, but strip it of its sentimental meaning, its practical implication is the prohibition of desire; whereas it is only when desire is so strong that it includes the whole man—

¹ *The Spectator*, Jan. 5, 1889.

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intellect, spirit, soul, what you will—that he
“fears to offend against his own affections.”

I send you a cream-white rosebud
With a flush on its petal tips;
For the love that is purest and sweetest
Has a kiss of desire on the lips.¹

To pursue the analysis of love farther than this would be to enter into a region beset with difficulties of nomenclature. If a new phraseology could be invented, suggestive neither of the public-house nor the dissecting-room, the enlightening views of Poetry (who takes all knowledge for her proper sphere) could be set forth in all departments of the subject; but where every other sentence must contain terms, either scientifically alien from life or associated with ribaldry, this is impossible.

Nor would any one undertaking such a work receive any support or encouragement from Medicine. Physicians are just as much under the bondage of the pure and impure doctrine as the clergy. Where is that much-needed popular book *The Revenges of Sup-*

¹ *Lyra Celtica*, p. 161.

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pressed Nature? Of Nature, outraged by the abstentions enforced by a highly artificial, and in some respects meretricious, state of society; revenges, which commence at School, where boys and girls are shut up from the natural attraction of each other, like beasts in a menagerie, and the healthy social life of home is turned into a barrack life or worse.

These things, and many like things, are well known to Medicine; but she is cowardly and maintains a discreet silence; even regarding the special study of them as somewhat inferior and unprofessional.

Sec. (d).
SCIENTIFIC
VIEW OF
ASCETIC IDEAS.

Suppressed sex is in fact a disease more distinct than suppressed gout, and the alienist (which seems to be the fashionable euphemism for mad-doctor) has occasionally spoken plainly concerning it. In all such notions as that of "purity," there is, in fact, a certain degree of insanity; "the root of them is ascetic,—the desire of self-sacrifice, without adequate reason, but chiefly in order to experience the self-righteous feeling of martyrdom. It is prompted by the

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same motives as wield the flagellum of the monk and raised the pillar of Stylites, and, more than this, the motive is precisely that of the suicide—the desire to injure one's self for the sake of injuring one's self, in order to satisfy the sexual instinct of self-sacrifice.”¹ Thus the supposed extremes meet, and the brain of the holy ascetic is perhaps in a state of greater erotic excitement than that of the every-day person who takes life as it comes; and thus the ascetic rule always overleaps itself and becomes the rule of its own pleasure.

How civilised man came to look askance *See. (c).*
on the instinct of love, from which is de-
rived the greater part of his joy and good-
ness, is not easy to discover. Many theories
have been invented to account for it; as,
for instance, Westermarck’s idea that the
feeling has been derived, by association, from
the prohibition of marriage between kindred.²

THE SUPER-
STITION OF THE
MARRIAGE
RITE

¹ *Sanity and Insanity*, by C. Mercier, pp. 355–356.

² *The History of Human Marriage*, p. 155. Wester-
marck is a good authority for observed facts, but his
inductions seem often questionable. Thus he gives a de-
finition of marriage which would extend the term to the

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The reason may perhaps be sought in more simple processes of human thought and development.

The legend of the Garden of Eden is a symbol of the continuous history of the world. The savage lives in a mental paradise; everything comes to him as a necessity.¹ Then enters to him Civilisation and teaches him good and evil; and thereafter, Religion proves him a sinner and turns him out of that paradise into a world where he has infinitely greater joy and infinitely greater sorrow. Among other powers of life, his instinct of love grows from a tuft

union of birds and beasts (p. 19), to which he actually does extend it (p. 21). Yet in another place he says that Marriage in the European sense of the term does not exist among savage peoples (p. 60), instancing the absence of the marriage ceremony. But even if this be correct as to the ceremony, what can its absence prove, if one is already arguing from a definition of marriage which does not include mention of the ceremony? Surely the real fact is that rudiments of a ceremony are always traceable, as in the analogous transfer of land, and that the contract so initiated is enforced by custom (the origin of the Common Law).

¹ See Westermarck, *op. cit.* Ch. xvi.

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of mustard-seed into a giant of the forest, casting a vast shadow and harbouring all kinds of birds of the air,—poetry, music,—tragedy, comedy,—all the bright songsters of Art. But this tree is a slip of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the fruit of which Civilisation has taught him to eat; and still Religion, jealous of his knowledge, pursues him with punishments for his loss of ignorance.

That is to say, that Religion, fearful of infringement of divine authority, has always branded the whole Tree evil and only to be made good by a special manifestation of religious divinity—marriage—which was ready to hand in the custom of all countries.

The effect of this has been to give into the hands of her ministers an enormous lever of influence—the admiration and veneration excited by the spectacle of celibacy, undertaken and endured for the sake of Religion; or, at all events, the submission necessarily shown to the gracious pardoners of Love, by means of the holy rite which they alone have the power to administer.

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This facile method of obtaining dominion over men, by branding a universal instinct unclean and then prescribing the only means of cleansing it, was a natural result, perhaps, of the association of a religious ceremony with the civil contract. Though "Küchler states that in Japan the marriage ceremony is entirely of a social nature, no religious element entering into it all,"¹ yet in most countries easy occasion has been provided for an ecclesiastical contract to supersede the civil one. Thus, by way of example, "though by Buddhist monks marriage is regarded as a concession to human frailty, and in Buddhistic countries it is therefore a simple civil contract, nevertheless it is commonly contracted with some religious ceremony, and often with the assistance of a Lama."² Moreover, it would be very difficult to believe that a religion that contains the myth that "Buddha's mother, who was the best and purest of the daughters of men, had no other sons and her conception was

¹ Westermarck, p. 425, note 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 425.

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due to supernatural causes,”¹ would have nothing to say to the daughters of men, who proposed to depart from that great example and to conceive by natural causes. “Among the Mohammedans also, marriage, though a mere civil contract, is concluded with a prayer to Allah.”² But surely, wherever prayer obtains, Religion guides.

Again, “among the Hebrews, though marriage was no religious contract, and there is no trace of a priestly consecration of it, either in the Scriptures or in the Talmud; yet, according to Ewald, it may be taken for granted that a consecration took place on the day of betrothal or wedding, though the particulars have not been preserved in any ancient description.”³ But if the Mosaic law did not control marriage itself, it regulated its concomitants, seduction and divorce, as well as prohibiting it within certain degrees of consanguinity and affinity.

At all events, “from S. Paul’s words, Τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν,⁴ in the Vul-

¹ Westermarck, p. 153.

² *Ibid.*, p. 425.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Ephesians v, 32.

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gate translated *Sacramentum hoc magnum est*, the dogma that marriage is a sacrament was gradually developed. Though this dogma was fully recognised in the twelfth century, marriage was nevertheless considered valid, without ecclesiastical benediction, till the year 1563, when the Council of Trent made it an essentially religious ceremony.”¹

This usurpation by Religion of authority over a contract, the uses of which are entirely social, political, and commercial, naturally led to some very curious results, since Religion's first object of solicitude is always herself. For instance, “although S. Paul indicates that a Christian is not allowed to marry a heathen,² and Tertullian fiercely condemns such an alliance, yet in early times the Church often encouraged marriages of this sort as a means of propagating Christianity, and it was only when its success was beyond doubt that the Council of Elvira expressly forbade them.”³

¹ Westermarck, *op. cit.* pp. 427–428.

² 1 *Corinthians*, vii, 39.

³ Westermarck, *op. cit.* p. 375.

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In short, ecclesiastical authority has never found it convenient to admit that "the nakedness of woman is the work of God;"¹ which is the poetic way of saying that sex is the work of God. When the words are written down one wonders whether it can be necessary to declare such a truism. But is it a truism? Religion has never accepted it; perhaps never will; though it may be that at some future time it will become a question dividing the world. Religion regards not Love as divine, but Marriage; and even that very grudgingly.

Marriage is divine in the sense that all things are; but love preceded marriage, and when Man created marriage, he surely never contemplated that it would be accounted more holy than love.

Jesus said that divorce was permitted because of the hardness of men's hearts. May not the same cause be alleged for the institution of marriage? What is it but a contract devised for the protection of women and

¹ *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* See *Selections from the Writings of William Blake*, p. 157.

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children? And whence does it derive its force, if not from the Statute Book and the penalties attached to infringement, supported by custom and the sanction of society, as all effectual law must be?

Poetry has no fault to find with marriage, as a legal bond designed for the benefit and continuance of society; but whereas Religion holds that Marriage alone sanctifies Love, Poetry affirms that Love alone sanctifies Marriage; which is plainly Milton's opinion in his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*; for that which is unclean can never be sanctified,¹ nor can a ceremony change the nature of an act. "Why, papa, I thought that marriage was a rather wicked sacrament, said a young lady, who had been

¹ Our very "ideas of clean and unclean are largely derived from the primitive custom of *taboo*. . . . Touching of a holy thing made a man unclean as much as the touching of an unholy or anti-holy thing. What we call unclean was a thing set apart from man's use; not necessarily unclean in the ordinary sense of that word. . . . The question of the *taboo* brings us to the relations of God and Man and conceptions of sin."—*The Old Testament and the New Scholarship*, by John P. Peters, pp. 118–121.

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brought up at one of the best Convent Schools in England, the other day to her father when he happened to be praising that institution.”¹ The logic is unavoidable. If love is impure so is the rite which pretends to sanctify it, and so is the state which that rite professes to create.

Unholy Love can never produce Holy Matrimony; as Job needed to look God in the face, so do men and women need to look Love in the face, who assuredly is God’s messenger to them, to teach them that no man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself. Why should they resent the compulsion or be afraid of the joy? But before Job could see God, he had to clear away the intervening superstitions of Religion; and before men and women can see Love, they must be quit of the *superstition of the marriage rite*. Marriage must be retained as a temporary expedient for the infirmity of mankind, who cannot at present dispense with outward and visible signs; but when it is erected into an idol more vast

¹ *Religio Poetae*, by Coventry Patmore, p. 104.

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than Baal and more rapacious than Moloch,
the heavens recede and Love betakes himself
to regions not salubrious.

Sec. (f).
**A DIGRESSION
CONCERNING
THE NUDE IN
ART.**

I never yet knew a woman who was not a Manichean at heart. All women, I think, have a secret conviction that, though God made the soul, the Devil made the body. They agree with the feminine mind of Sir Thomas Browne, and would like to obliterate sex, without obliterating children ; though how they suppose that children would inherit joy without being conceived in joy does not appear. It seems inconceivable by them that when God imprinted sex on protoplasm (if we like to put it in that pseudo-scientific manner) he possibly knew what he was about. But women were held in cruel sexual subjection for thousands of years, and treated by Religion as unclean, and it is therefore no wonder that they continually pose as pure. They have yet to learn the sublime meaning of Blake's words : "The nakedness of woman is the work of God"; though it must be confessed that they seem thoroughly to enter into the spirit of the contiguous sentence :

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“The pride of the peacock is the glory of God”!¹

This false attitude of the feminine mind has been nowhere exemplified so well as in the outcry that women have raised from time to time against “the nude in Art.”

Their objection depends on a confusion between nudity and nakedness, which are by no means the same. Blake uses the latter word in a symbolic sense; but its actual meaning is common in the Bible.² In this sense there is no nakedness in the artistic nude, except in that which is deliberately obscene. Especially in the female nude (to which the chief objection attaches) there is no nakedness. It exists only in the observer’s eye, or rather in his or her mind’s eye. It is a most vivid instance of the power of imagination (in this instance perverted) and of the topsy-turvy way in which the world

¹ *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* See *Selections*, pp. 156–157.

² See, for example, *Genesis* ix, 22; *Leviticus*, *passim*; *Isaiah* XLVII, 3; *Ezekiel* XXXIII, 18; *Revelation* III, 18, &c.

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regards life. That which is entirely absent is seen as if it were present. It is the most perfect instance of illusion, depending on depraved imagination, that can be found in the whole range of human experience.

The use of clothes, in fact, did not arise and does not exist for the purpose of concealing nudity, but rather of suggesting it. Carlyle puts the truth in a very attenuated form : "The first purpose of Clothes is not warmth or decency, but ornament."¹ From this inadequate statement he naturally draws an inadequate conclusion : "Clothes which began in foolishest love of Ornament, what have they not become ! . . . Shame, divine Shame (*Schaam, Modesty*), as yet a stranger to the Anthropophagous bosom, arose there mysteriously under Clothes, a mystic grove-encircled shrine for the Holy in man."² It was nothing of the kind, except in the sense that sex itself is holy; for the real origin of garments was to increase attraction.³ Wherefore certain savage tribes regard them

¹ *Sartor Resartus*, p. 34.

² *Ibid*, p. 36.

³ Westermarck, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

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as indecent. "They excite through the unknown; in other words by suggestion."¹ Eastern women cover their face for the same reason, though the custom is attributed to modesty, and the scarlet robe has the same signification among them as it had in the days of the Kings of Israel.

"The sweeping pall and buskin, and nodding plume," says Hazlitt, "were never more serviceable to Tragedy, than the enormous hoops and stiff stays worn by the belles of former days were to the intrigues of Comedy. They assisted wonderfully in heightening the mysteries of the passion, and adding to the intricacy of the plot. Wycherley and Vanbrugh could not have spared the dresses of Vandyke. These strange fancy-dresses, perverse disguises, and counterfeit shapes, gave an agreeable scope to the imagination. 'That seven-fold fence,' was a sort of foil to the lusciousness of the dialogue, and a barrier against the sly encroachments of *double entendre*. The greedy eye and bold hand of indiscretion were re-

¹ Westermarck, pp. 194 and 201.

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pressed, which gave a greater licence to the tongue. The senses were not to be gratified in an instant. Love was entangled in the folds of the swelling handkerchief, and the desires might wander for ever round the circumference of a quilted petticoat, or find a rich lodging in the flowers of a damask stomacher. There was room for years of patient contrivance; for a thousand thoughts, schemes, conjectures, hopes, fears, and wishes. There seemed no end of difficulties and delays; to overcome so many obstacles was the work of ages. A mistress was an angel concealed behind whalebone, flounces, and brocade. What an undertaking to penetrate through the disguise! What an impulse must it give to the blood, what a keenness to the invention, what a volubility to the tongue! ‘Mr. Smirk, you are a brisk man,’ was then the most significant commendation. But now-a-days—a woman can be but *undressed!*”¹

Sec. (g). Apart from the supreme teaching of the *Book of Job*, in which Poetry is sealed with

¹ *The Round Table*, p. 20.

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an authority equal to or greater than that of THE SONG OF
SOLOMON. Religion, the best remedy against feminine Manicheism is also to be found in the Bible.

The Song of Solomon is a sacred lesson on Love which every woman ought to study for herself. Stripped of its sacerdotal finery of “spiritual interpretation,” and standing

Sublimely in the nude, as chaste
As Medicean Venus,¹

it presents to us the most exquisite picture of passionate love imaginable, in the form of an idyllic drama.

It is, however, impossible to understand the poem as it is printed in the Bible, the names of the various speakers having dropped out of the manuscripts. Whether it be regarded as a lyrical drama or a dramatic idyll, its meaning equally depends upon the proper allocation of the speeches.²

As a miniature drama it tells us in brief the tale of a country girl who is wooed

¹ *Aurora Leigh*, by E. B. Browning. See *Poetical Works*, vol. v, p. 114.

² See Lyman Abbott's *Life and Literature of the Ancient Hebrews*.

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by the mighty monarch, Solomon, in vain.
He offers her all that wealth can bestow
of luxury and pleasure; he offers her all
that royalty can afford of dignity and
rank; he offers her the highest honour in
his power, the equivalent to our marriage—
he, before whose wisdom and magnificence
the magnificent and wise Queen of Sheba
bowed her head—and he offers them in vain.
Why in vain? Was it that she had some
better match in prospect? Impossible. No
ambition could vault higher than to be the
spouse of Solomon. Was it that she had
taken vows of chastity, or desired to take
them? On the contrary, it was simply that
she was passionately in love with a country
lad, and the curtain falls, as it were, on her
faithful love-song—

Set me as a seal upon thine heart . . .
For love is strong as death . . .
Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can floods drown it;
If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,
He would utterly be contemned.¹

¹ *Revised Version*, viii, 6–7. These are not the last words in the Idyll; but, dramatically, they should be;

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Love fills her imagination ; she is transfigured by love. Perhaps that is why she is so beautiful in the King's eyes ; for when, in answer to his flatteries, she replies that she is only a rustic, a lily of the valley, it might well be said of her that *Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.* It is the raiment of passion that is her breastplate and shield of defence ; she was truly "clothed on with chastity," but it was the chastity of the longing for another embrace than Solomon's.

I am not suggesting that there are not women alive who would not emerge unscathed from a similar temptation, though it is doubtful whether so great a one could now be devised. Women have often preferred love to wealth, and often will do so, though prone to repent afterwards and to resent the consequences. That is not my

and Mr. Lyman Abbott apparently takes the same view, for they are the last he quotes. Professor Moulton, who regards the poem as a *lyrical drama*, quotes the remaining verses, which need considerable explanation.—*Literary Study of the Bible*, pp. 216-217.

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point. My point is that the passion which causes them to do so is for ever stamped as admirable and holy, for all those at least who count the Scriptures as the word of God.

Sec. (k.)
CONCLUSION.

The conclusion of the whole matter is this :—The true mystery is Life ; Death is only a subsidiary mystery, dependent on Life ; Death is the means by which we appreciate Life ; we know Life by its cessation ; if we were possessed of Eternal Life, we should not be conscious of being alive.

The disintegration of the individual after Death into Soul and Body is a supposition never yet clearly verified. Ghosts *may* walk after Death ; but it is far more clear that they walk *before* it. We are all ghosts, and each to each is an apparition ; the disintegration that takes place at Death (if it does take place) is not more wonderful, to say the least, than the amalgamation that exists during life ; and this amalgamation is not only quite as worthy of our study, but it is also subject to our investigation

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in a manner in which the disintegration is not subject.

Of this vital amalgamation Love is, in a special sense, the expression, and the attempt to dissect it into two parts, spiritual and physical, is a lethal process. Even in the strict view of physiology, Sex, with its marvellous mechanism and adjustment, is so intimately connected with brain, and therefore with mind, that it would be true to say that the need of man for woman and woman for man is a need far transcending the demands of functional requirements; true, though we were to exclude all those Attractions, which now we only guess at by the vague names of Mesmerism, Hypnotism, Electro-Biology, and so on.

There is no such thing as opposite sexes, which is a most comically inappropriate expression; the sexes are reciprocal, complementary; and the stress laid on their antagonism is but one more device to increase the delight of their union. It is an error to suppose that disparity exists between men and women in consequence of

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the bearing of children. Motherhood causes relations to exist *between women and Society* different from those existing between men and Society ; but it causes no inequality of sex whatever between two lovers. Their condition is simply one of joyful and natural Desire, which no prudential considerations can possibly affect, although delay in marriage may be endured for economic reasons.

The subjection or servitude of woman to man is a traditional fiction (possibly a feudal reminiscence), except when she is sold for a “valuable consideration ;” which, as the English law well discerns, includes Marriage. In mutual Love there are mutual subjections, and therefore innocent liberty. But women often indulge, as a compensation for their supposed bodily enslavements, in a perpetual mental rebellion. Let them first accept sexual equality, instead of posing as sacrificial victims, and all other equalities will be added to them,—domestic, social, and political.

If, as Science alleges, the rudiment of sex

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was the division of a cell into two parts, then every man and woman that wed are, perhaps, unconsciously reminiscent of their origin and striving to become one. If, on the other hand, the cell had before it such a wonderful and divine future, the man and woman may have another, equally divine and wonderful, before them. Meanwhile, though among the millions of unions that take place few result in anything like a true unitedness, yet the very striving for such a coalescence is surely a divine process, leading to unimaginable intellectual and physical beauty and happiness in the future race. *They twain shall be one flesh*, may, in future ages, receive a new meaning, only to be expressed by another formula, implied, perhaps, in the older one: *They twain shall be one spirit*. This is the prophecy of Poetry, gazing by means of prayer and fasting—the adoration of beauty and the self-sacrifice of labour—through the veil of the flesh, and perceiving that unless a question of Spirit were involved, Love could not possibly have enlarged the range of human affection, of

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human imagination, and human joy as it has, or have inspired the mind of a man with such intellectual beauty as that which finds expression in *The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.*

CHAPTER III

AS PROPHET OF IMAGINATION

THE Poet is the Prophet of Joy and of Love; but more than all, as including all the Joy obtainable on Earth, he is the Prophet of Imagination.

This is both his highest and hardest teaching; for the truth is that both men and women, but especially women, are hag-ridden by the illusion of the senses. Their intellect is the slave of their emotions, and Religion loves to have it so; for through human emotion she exercises her authority.

But all the great martyrs of the world—Socrates, Jesus (and others who have not all, perhaps, actually come to execution)—have suffered in the cause of Intellectual Joy. They thought they could increase the happiness of the world by increasing its range of intellect and its passion of thought,

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and for this heretical teaching Religion put them to death, because her control over mankind depends on the maintenance of sorrowful emotion, to which joyous thought is the direct antidote. Her stronghold is the sentiment of sadness. So long as she can hold men mindful of the sinfulness of this, that, and the other, so long can she apply her remedies ; so long as she can keep them in remembrance of death, so long can she administer her consolations. But the overmastering passion of a man for a woman or a woman for a man is the best remedy for a wandering spirit, and to those who live only to die, nothing in life is sacred ; whereas, to those who regard Life as their Chief Knowledge of Divinity, all things are holy.

The attempt of Religion to set up Emotion as superior to Intellect is itself merely a perverted effort of mind. "The requirement which Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in his treatise *Cur Deus Homo*, had enforced—that we must first believe without examination, and may afterwards

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endeavour to understand what we have thus believed "¹"—is merely to require us to exercise our will against our reason.

But the will thus exercised is nothing but a mandate of inhibition issued by the mind. If the mind be destroyed, emotion and will are destroyed. Pathology clearly recognises that hysteria is a cerebral derangement, and that a morbid will is closely related to, or produces, insanity.

There is no escape from Mind. Even in matters of faith, some one must once on a time have received in his mind the impressions which caused the formulation of creeds; and creeds themselves can have been in no way formulated except by Mind.

The demand of Religion that Man should repudiate his divinity by repudiating his Reason seems to have arisen from the illusion of distance, of which mention has been made before; so that an ancient operation of the mind assumes by degrees the aspect of

¹ Draper, *op. cit.* p. 211. Compare the concluding paragraph of *The Imitation of Christ*: "All reason and natural research ought to follow faith, and not to go before it nor weaken it."

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an operation of the soul—that is, of mystical emotion. The authority imputed to tradition is a very curious relic of the ages when oral tradition was the only means of carrying on continuity of thought and a correct repetition of laws and customs was a sacred duty. But, in fact, whatever aeons may intervene, and whatever vast superstructures may have been imposed on it, the foundation of thought remains unalterably Thought—a process of Mind. Moreover, to represent it as spiritual—as something that is detached from Reason and attached to Emotion—is, to say the least, to substitute the less mystery for the greater, since a good deal is known about Emotion, but Thought remains as inscrutable as ever.

Mind is, in fact, the Holy of Holies, wherein God and Man meet, and whence Man issues with God's glory on his face; and for this reason Man cannot avoid God; for wherever Mind is, there God is—

Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;

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If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there shall thy hand lead me
And thy right hand shall hold me.
If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me,
Then the night shall be light about me ;
Even the darkness hideth not from thee,
But the night shineth as the day :
The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.¹

This fundamental truth, that the meeting-place of God and Man is in the Mind, has been recognised over and over again by Poetry, and were it ever admitted by Religion would go far towards reconciling her to Science.

Consider the following passage from Blake. Making due allowance for the rhapsodical manner of its utterance, what does it contain but this very truth? "Men are admitted into Heaven," he says, "not because they have curbed and governed their passions, or have no passions, but because they have cultivated their understanding.

¹ *Psalm cxxxix, 7-12, Revised Version and marginal readings.*

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The treasures of heaven are not negations of passion, but realities of intellect from which all the passions emanate, uncurbed in their eternal glory. The fool shall not enter into heaven, let him be ever so holy. Holiness is not the price of entrance into heaven. Those who are cast out are all those who, having no passions of their own, because no intellect, have spent their lives in curbing and governing other people's by the various arts of poverty and cruelty of all kinds. The modern church crucifies Christ with the head downwards. Woe, woe, woe, to you, hypocrites."¹

What power is it that achieves such prophetic verities? Surely the same power as created and recreated Religion, but which now the Churches refuse to exercise; the same power as leads Science to all her greatest discoveries—Imagination.

This, the highest function of the mind, is the opposite of Fancy. Wherever Imagination is necessary, Fancy would be fatal; for whereas the former is rooted in Reason, the

¹ See *Selections*, p. 254.

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latter is the growth of Unreason, and while Fancy has a vision of unreal things, Imagination has a vision of things that are real. Thus Blake says of heaven: "Here are no longer talking of what is good and evil, or of what is right or wrong, and puzzling themselves in Satan's labyrinth, but are conversing with eternal realities, as they exist in the human imagination."¹

Lacking Imagination, the equipment of Science would be totally inadequate; which is, perhaps, best exemplified in that Science which more than any other has been the means of abating the incredible arrogance of Religion; the only one that can boast of disciples persecuted and martyred at the hands of Religion,—I mean Astronomy. The history of Copernicus, Galileo, Bruno, and others, who, by dethroning the earth from her dominating position as the centre of the universe, undermined, according to the spiritual authorities, the very foundation of revealed truth, proves that all the correlated data in the world would be of no use

¹ *Selections*, p. 252.

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to the scientist unless he could form from them an image of the truth that lies beyond them and to which they point ; for the search for a new truth, itself to serve as a fresh starting-point for a repetition of the process, is only rendered possible by a prophecy of it, based on ascertained facts.

And what other method can Man use in his search for God ? Must he not study all the phenomena of life, including Religion ? Must he not compare these and deduce their relations to one another ? And, finally, must he not, by Imagination, touch the whole into light ?

On this head the words of Milton, in his short treatise *On Education*, may aptly be quoted : "Our understanding cannot in this body found itself but on sensible things, nor arrive so clearly to the knowledge of God and things invisible as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature." And to these may be added a passage from Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, in the third section of the first part, which is no less germane to our subject :

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“ As for the conceit that too much knowledge should incline a man to atheism, and that the ignorance of second causes should make a more devout dependence upon God, which is the first cause ; first, it is good to ask the question which Job asked of his friends : *Will you lie for God, as one man will do for another, to gratify him ?* ”

But the chief influence, tending to lead men to this truth, is not Science so much as Poetry ; because Science cannot be said, in any sense, to search for God, and Poetry alone recognises Man as the High-Priest of his own mystery, the Mind, and seeks to lead him into the sanctuary, and leave him there to his communion.

BOOK V
THE FAILURE OF MODERN POETRY

CHAPTER I

THROUGH COMMERCIALISM

Poetry in these days often fails mournfully of her divine mission, though still bearing her flickering torch through the darkness. Once Religion and Poetry gained much from each other. Poetry gained from the authority of Religion and Religion gained from the humanity of Poetry ; but as Religion more and more withdrew from the authority of Humanity, so Poetry withdrew from Religion.

Though written from a religious point of view and with a religious intent, nothing concerning the state of the world remains so true as Cardinal Newman's description: "To consider the world in its length and breadth ; its various history ; the many races of man ; their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts ; and then their

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ways, habits, governments, forms of worship ; their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and requirements ; the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turns out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes ; the greatness and littleness of man ; his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity ; the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil ; physical pain, mental anguish ; the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions ; the dreary, hopeless irreligion ; that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, *Having no hope and without God in the world*—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal ; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution. What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact ? I can only answer,

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that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from his presence.”¹

Cast out of the House of Wisdom and the Place of Understanding, expelled from the Temple of Thought—out of its mind, in the saddest sense—the world certainly seems. If Philip Bailey’s character of Satan be true—and it surely has deep insight—namely, that he has “a profound knowledge of surfaces,” mankind would seem especially to suffer from demoniacal possession in the present age. True it is, no doubt, that “Necessity urges him on; Time will not stop, neither can he, a son of Time. Wild passions without solace, wild faculties without employment ever vex and agitate him.”² Yet besides and beyond this, what produces so vivid an impression of Satanic agency as contact with beings who are entirely engrossed in externals? Such persons are more unearthly than the soulless Undine of the German legend; because they force their souls to minister to

¹ *Apologia pro Viâ Sudâ*, pp. 241–242.

² *Sartor Resartus*, p. 115.

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their senses, instead of teaching their senses to minister to their souls. Their souls are dissipated into their senses, with the result that their emotions demand eternal excitement ; yet, do what they will, they remain discontented, peevish, neurotic ; because they cannot narcotise themselves with sensation, sufficiently to prevent their souls from clamouring and wailing to return to their rightful habitation.

If this be at all a faithful portrait of the Spirit of the Age, there need be no compulsion to define terms. Words that convey a true idea justify themselves. The desire for joy, which inhabits that part of us that we call the soul, can only be satisfied by the closest union of our soul with our mind ; that is, by imagination or passion of intellect, through which alone is the search for God possible. But how can such union be maintained at a time when money is the one all-powerful force (for Balzac's words are as true as ever), when money is the law-giver, socially and politically ? "One hope and one ambition possess us all, to pass *per fas et*

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nefas into this earthly paradise of luxury, vanity and pleasure ; to deaden the soul and mortify the body, for a brief possession of this promised land ; just as in other days men were found willing to lay down their lives and to suffer martyrdom for the hope of eternal bliss.”¹ Or what more true could be said now than was said by our native Balzac, Fielding : “The pleasures of the world are chiefly folly and the business of it mostly knavery, and both nothing better than vanity ; the men of pleasure tearing one another to pieces from the emulation of spending money, the men of business from envy in getting it.”²

Or (to take a more recent author, writing from the Social Economist’s point of view), how can we deny the truth of M. Letourneau’s remarks, even though we may disagree with his political conclusions, when he speaks of “the present commercialisation of morals, the love of any sort of gain, the rage for accumulation, very often masked under

¹ *Eugénie Grandet*, p. 102.

² *The Adventures of Joseph Andrews*, pp. 217–218.

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the assumption of a lofty morality? The palm is offered," he says, "not to the best—that is, to the individuals most endowed with intelligence and character—but to those who, in one way or another, and even by skilfully manœuvring between certain awkward clauses of the law, succeed in amassing large fortunes."¹

Well indeed did Bunyan write: "Give me not riches (*Proverbs xxx, 8*) is scarcely the prayer of one in ten thousand";² may we not rather say, is scarcely the prayer of any living soul? For while a few devote themselves to poverty, thinking to lay up treasure hereafter, how many are there, who, having daily bread and butter, do not envy those who have daily bread and jam? How many are there, who, in the property of their own minds, possess all the happiness they require, and fear to be drawn out of it by the

Obstinate questionings

Of sense and outward things

that wealth brings with it.

¹ *Property*, pp. 96–97, and 372.

² *The Pilgrim's Progress*, p. 229.

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Of course, against this may be set the curious assertion of Dr. Johnson that "there are few ways in which a man can be more innocently employed than in getting money."¹ Unintentionally, no doubt, it is, perhaps, the most cynical sentence ever uttered; for just as the highest praise is unintentional, so is the greatest cynicism. Apart from this, however, the question is not whether it is better for an individual to be on the treadmill than committing burglary, but whether it is better for a whole community to be on the treadmill. Commercialisation, not only of morals, but of ideas, is a sad and strange concomitant of the teaching that *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*²

Trade, with its flourish of fairness and essential deceit—its operations, manipulations, and combinations, cloaked with intricate finance and fine phraseology—has become a Religion, inimical to all Reason and Imagination that do not minister,

¹ Boswell's *Life*, vol. II, p. 156.

² *Luke* iv, 3.

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directly or indirectly, to its interests; and the wars and rumours of wars with which the earth is filled are due to Trade having become the father of War, and no longer content merely to "follow the flag." The world is suffering from an obsession of business, and nothing but business or politics, which is national business, is regarded as serious work. The man who goes to an office every day, even if he does nothing but read the newspaper, is esteemed, as connected with something practical; while the wretch, who spends his whole existence in the study and composition of literature or music, is looked upon as engaged in producing what the world could very well do without, and as rather amusing himself than otherwise.

This is not a contest of Owl with Nightingale, but of Belly with Brain. Does this mortal frame exist for the purposes of mind, or does mind exist for purposes of body? This tumid arrogance of Commerce is second only to that of Religion, and it is high time that it was depleted. In spite of

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all its swagger, it has not abolished shameful and degrading poverty. Does it try to abolish it? or does it not rather encourage always "a brutal and extreme individualism, inevitably resulting in the concentration of property in a small number of hands."¹

At all events, however true it may be that the body must be fed and clothed, it is not true that it must be clothed in purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day; still less that it must be kept in a continual state of restless excitement, which is modern society's notion of enjoyment; whose truest emblem is the herd of monkeys, drawn for us in Mr. Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Tales*, chattering and grimacing, as they swing their way from bough to bough, through the forest.

Those who, according to their own pretensions, ought to be most opposed to this gross and indecent materialism are its most ardent supporters. To the charge of women must be laid a great deal of the superhuman efforts men make to attain to luxury, indo-

¹ *Property*, by C. Letourneau, p. 372.

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lence, sterilisation of intellect, and general apathy to anything except sensual pleasure. It has always been in women that superstition and convention have found their safe asylum, and it is so still. They are engrossed in the observation and observance of manners and customs ; "they are the slaves," said Dr. Johnson, "of order and fashion"; and more he said, which is also true, but is better read in the pages of Boswell than in mine.¹ Vain as are their lynx-like perceptions of all that affects their own pleasure or comfort, they are always the champions of common-sense as against logic; of authority as against reform; of instinct as against reason; of fancy as against imagination. They are the most secret and most powerful opponents of thought that the world possesses, and hence comes the compact that always exists between them and the Religion of their day. Thought, in others, humiliates them, and they bitterly resent any attempt to make them think. Most, in fact, are ignorant of the meaning of thought, and connect it with

¹ Boswell's *Life*, vol. II, p. 384.

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dreary reverie. Where is the necessity of thinking to those who accept the opinion of the world as the highest truth attainable, oblivious that even in every-day matters, essential to its own health or comfort, the world is nearly always wrong?¹

One might have supposed that this refusal to recognise the divinity in human nature, or the attempt to transfer it from the mind to the nerves, was due to a desire on men's part to enjoy, in their intercourse with women, a contrast; in other words, to amuse themselves with women's silliness—a kind of application of the fallacy of "opposite sexes"—a set-off of sympathy of body by aversion of mind: one might have supposed so, if men themselves cared for thought and imagination, outside commercial transactions or scientific researches that contribute to commercial success. But it is not so. There is nothing that is not regarded by the great mass of men as of inferior importance to money and money's worth, and

¹ See Chapter iv. of this Book. The list could be almost indefinitely extended.



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the last thing to occur to them would be that Poetry has any practical use in the world, beyond affording a precarious livelihood to a certain number of persons, unfitted by temperament for financial responsibilities, and a pleasing distraction to the more sane portion of the community. Nothing would surprise them more than to be told that, even from their own point of view, Poetry is the most practical thing in the world, because it teaches what is indispensable to the affairs that absorb their chief reverence and devotion—trade and war; since the financier and the strategist must both possess imagination—the one to forestall the money-market and the other to anticipate the enemy.

But whatever men may do in the future—if they ever shake off the brain-fever of the gold-disease and pay attention to things of real importance—women will never develop their reasoning and imaginative faculties so long as they are under the subjection of the marriage-market ; so long as their profession is coquetry, and their success, to be purchased



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by a well-to-do husband. Whether economic conditions will ever sufficiently change, so as to permit them to be independent of matrimonial support, and to liberate their minds from unremitting attention to adornments and accomplishments, the immediate motive of which is the envious emulation of each other, depends perhaps upon whether men are ever cured of their aforesaid brain-sickness. An evil interaction goes on; women want rich husbands, and men must struggle to get rich if they are to satisfy their wives. The true reason why women regard business as the only really serious thing in life, and will even make sacrifices for men engaged therein, is because they feel that a financier implies luxury, and a politician implies social position; whereas a woman, attached by domestic bonds to a poet, generally feels that he is keeping her poor and unknown.

But whether men will ever attain emancipation from the worship of Mammon, and women from the worship of Matrimony, will largely depend on the Poet's success in the cultivation of human Imagination; for no-

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where is the importance of Imagination so clearly evident as in the sphere of Relation and Proportion, by which the various activities that constitute the Economy of Life are brought into comparison and their values determined.

CHAPTER II

THROUGH LOSS OF THE SENSE OF RELATION AND PROPORTION

I HAVE often thought that the world would be a better place if every one born into it were compelled to study elementary geometry. To have passed safely across the *Pons Asinorum* would perhaps convince some, who, for want of this knowledge, would do much mischief in the course of their lives, that all valuations are worthless, except those that are the result of mental comparison, since even the proof of the measurement of tangible things is not physical, but mental. "Undoubtedly," says Swift, "philosophers are in the right when they tell us that nothing is great or little otherwise than by comparison."¹ This is the true significance of *Gulliver's Travels*, which is not merely an

¹ See *Selections from his Prose Writings*, p. 117.

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amusing satire on human life, but a very profound lesson that to the unabsolute mind nothing can be absolute, and only a balance of result can be obtained by comparison. This also is the teaching of Abbot's *Flatland*, that most witty, but little known, exemplification of how easily the conditions of life may be altered by altering their relationship.

The idea that the mind can conceive absolute Justice or absolute Beauty seems to have led even Plato astray; for although he teaches that all thought proceeds by comparison,¹ yet when he says "Things must inevitably appear in a certain sense both fair and foul, both just and unjust, both holy and unholy, as double things may be considered halves just as well as doubles,"² he does not perceive that the solution of these conflicting properties of all earthly things is not reference to an unattainable celestial Absolute, but the calculation of a terrestrial Resultant.

Whether we wish it or not, the relationship

¹ *The Republic*, Bk. v, 479, and Bk. vii, 523-525.

² *Ibid.* p. 195.

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of things reigns supreme, even in every-day life. To the eyes of an infant everything appears on one plane, and the moon just as near to it as its rattle. The idea of distance is only revealed to it when the sense of touch enables it to compare the distance of one thing with that of another. In like manner, it is said that the eyes of a horse magnify, whereby human beings appear to him monstrous and terrible ; and though there is here present a fallacy, since, in that case, other horses must appear to him proportionately great, and therefore men proportionately small, yet it must, nevertheless, be true that there is no such thing as absolute size, but that every object appears to the beholder of such a size as his optical vision represents it ; in other words size depends on the relation of sight to the thing seen.

Thus nothing can be defined without reference to comparison ; any attempt to the contrary results in nonsense. The remark that is commonly made by persons who wish to appear clever, that the world

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is mad, comes into this category ; because if it were true, there could be no madness, seeing that insanity in this popular sense has no existence except by comparison with the average or normal condition of mankind, which we call sanity. The school books also afford a good instance of the consequence of a false comparison, when they speak of islands as portions of land surrounded by water ; inasmuch as all land is surrounded by water ; wherefore all countries are islands. The true comparison aimed at is simply one of dimension.

In fact, all knowledge depends on the study of the true relation of one thing to another and the making a just comparison ; thence arise sound deductions.

All the best results of Science have been obtained by the mutual association and relationship of its different departments ; the one condition of success being that the subjects for comparison should be considered by a trained mind and an imaginative faculty.

Hence it follows that Matthew Arnold is surely in error when he says that " Philo-

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sophy has her own independent sphere, and Theology hers, and neither has the right to invade and try to subdue the other.”¹ Nothing has its own independent sphere, nothing is unrelated; and the value of every department of human thought depends upon the correctness of the synthesis which brings it into contact and comparison with every other. That habit which has induced men to pigeon-hole their ideas in the same way as they do their papers has arisen from mere convenience, which must not be confused with wisdom. Few men, perhaps, can or will make time for a systematic study of deductive logic—“the science of the relations implied by the inclusions, exclusions, and overlappings of classes”;² but they might at least avoid this ridiculous process of treating everything appertaining to human life as if it were a distinct entity. The man who keeps his Religion in a box and brings it out with his best hat on Sundays is, apart from any question of morals, no less ridicu-

¹ *Essays in Criticism*, pp. 372–373.

² *The Study of Sociology*, by Herbert Spencer, p. 222.

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lous than he who keeps his Art in a cupboard and brings it out with his opera-glasses when he goes to the theatre.

To finite intelligence nothing is incomparable except the incomprehensible, because it is only by comparison that anything is understood; and nothing is unrelated except God, who is absolute, and therefore incomprehensible, and can only be sought in his works, of which Mind is chief; although as the Mind is itself the seeker it can only imperfectly understand itself. God is the circumference and Mind the centre; God illuminates the Mind, which, like a prism, radiates the light in three principal colours—Religion, Science, and Art—whose borders coalesce, as in a rainbow, and are the most beautiful and interesting parts of them, forming many subdivisions, still further indicative of God's nature. For outside of the Mind all measurements, all appreciations are worthless; only within it are the grade of relation and the scales of proportion; there and there only can be estimated the true balance.

It is evident, therefore, that true Wisdom

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can only be attained by the culture of Imagination. Many things that men now estimate of supreme value will then be seen to be comparatively worthless, and many things now supposed to be "common or unclean" will then appear "pearls of great price." But Man does not know, "in this his day, the things that belong unto his peace; for now are they hid from his eyes"; because, as Wordsworth says—

The world is too much with us, late or soon,
Getting or spending, we lay waste our powers,

and Wordsworth was a sober poet, not given to rhapsody.

CHAPTER III

THROUGH FALSE IDEAS OF GENIUS

RETURNING from our ramble after Words, let us now put ourselves into remembrance that Poetry fails through Commercialism and through loss of the sense of Relation and Proportion. But it fails even more, perhaps, through false ideas of Genius.

If ever the world leave off standing on its head and subordinating the brain to the belly, a posture by no means conducive to true comparison, it will no longer esteem Art as less important than Business ; for it will perceive, that, whereas Business is the dream of material things, Art is the reality of intellectual things. Whether, however, Art will ever be powerful enough to set the world on its feet again is doubtful. Art, Religion, and Science might do it in combination ; but at present Religion and Science

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are too fond of their limits and limitations. Possibly Art will do it, when she has absorbed them both. Meanwhile, she can only protest against the errors produced by the world's abnormal posture ; and chief of these is the doctrine of Genius.

“The very essence of Poetry,” says Professor Courthope, “is supposed to lie in the inspiration of the individual poet, the sources of which are beyond the reach of critical investigation ; nor do I deny that there is some truth in this view of the matter. It may be freely admitted that in estimating that indefinable quality called Genius, the force that makes a great poet, a great statesman, or a great general what he is, must necessarily defy analysis.”¹

But statesmen and generals, however great, are not supposed to be exempt from labour. It is only in Art, and especially in Poetry, that success is thought to be *entirely* due to Genius. Why this is so it would be hard to say. One might have fancied that mere analogy would have prevented so stupid a

See. (a).
GENIUS IMPLIES
A PASSIONATE
GENERAL
DILIGENCE.

¹ *History of English Poetry*, vol. 1, p. 1.

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blunder. Even when Society talks of the Genius of its cooks and the Poetry of their dinners, it is not foolish enough to suppose that study and practice have had nothing to do with the perfect consummation of the ragoût or the trifle.

The common idea is, the more labour the less Genius ; in other words, the greater the labour the worse the Art. The truth is exactly the opposite. Genius alone is capable of that ideal of perfection which causes the intense and incessant toil of the true artist ; and Genius alone is capable of that patience of imagination which, seeing in the far distance the ideal form of its endeavour, accumulates by slow degrees out of the mass of rubbish that surrounds them, the grains of gold that are to build up its image.¹

¹ This was clearly very much Carlyle's view, whose famous *dictum* has suffered both by misquotation and extraction from its context. Thus in the *Nineteenth Century*, January 1887, Mr. Swinburne quotes the "infinite capacity for taking pains" as what "Carlyle professed to regard as the synonym of genius." This misconception of Carlyle's meaning has arisen from the following passage in his *Frederick the Great*: "The good plan

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This is also its own education. In doing this (to vary the metaphor) it feeds itself; for not even Genius can live on nothing, much less burgeon and grow strong. On the contrary, it is insatiable and omnivorous; and after it has once mastered the technique of its own particular mode of expression, the whole range of universal knowledge and the whole field of universal phenomena become its pasturage; though it rejects, as waste material, enormous quantities of the world's crude fodder, and turns only the essence into aliment. Such labour is lifelong, and requires a severe training of the reasoning faculties, for which geometry is the firmest foundation; for the mind has not the mechanical impulse of elimination of noxious matter that the body has, and can only effect it by comparison and proportionate estimates.

itself, this comes not of its own accord; it is the fruit of 'genius' (which means transcendent capacity for taking trouble, first of all); given a huge stack of tumbled thrums, it is not in your sleep that you will find the vital centre of it, or get the first thrum by the end!" (Vol. i, p. 288, of the *Popular Edition*. See *Notes and Queries*, 5th S. xii, 97, and 6th S. xi, 191.)

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Poems like *Christabel* (which are always thrown at one's head, so to speak, whenever one ventures to connect Genius with work) are nothing to the point. They are like the impromptus of a great composer of music. What gave him the power of fine impromptu except the arduous and persistent training of his gift? Coleridge, in spite of his opium, was a prodigious worker; his innumerable note-books are full of studies in poetic technique. Above all, he was a great philosopher; for if there be any quarrel at all between Poetry and Philosophy, it is entirely on the side of Philosophy, who perhaps objects to being so much utilised by Poetry and getting no credit for it. Mr. George Meredith cuts to the root of this matter, as he does of most matters, when he speaks of "the fiction which is a summary of actual life, the within and without of us, in prose or verse, plodding or soaring, Philosophy's elect handmaiden."¹

There is no need to cite Lucretius as the instance of a great philosopher-poet, for, in

¹ *Diana of the Crossways*, p. 15.

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fact, all great poets have been and must be philosophers; because philosophy is the application of logic to life, by which things are compared and set in their proper relations, so that the results of their coincidences and contrasts can be recorded. On these results Imagination must work, and if the imagination of the poet must be true, so must his philosophy.

Even William Hazlitt, who disparages poets in general, praises one poet in particular, because of his diligence: "Milton's works," he says, "are a perpetual invocation to the Muses, a hymn to Fame. His religious zeal infused its character into his imagination, and he devotes himself with the same sense of duty to the cultivation of his genius as he did to the exercise of virtue or the good of his country. He does not write from casual impulse, but after a severe examination of his own strength."¹

But the same might be said of the author of the *Book of Job*, of the *Aeneid*, of the *Divina Comedia*, of the *Fairy Queen*,—in

¹ *The Round Table*, p. 38.

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short, of the writers of all great poems ; for though we have only internal evidence to guide us to this conclusion in the case of the Hebrew poet, he, like the others, was clearly cognisant of all the science and literature of his age, and had pondered deeply and logically on the problems of life, besides being a consummate master of the curious antithetical form of Hebrew verse.¹

But here I think the reader will ask, rightly enough, What of lyrical Poetry ? Surely that at all events is the poetry of casual impulse, of sudden inspiration, unconnected with preliminary study or deep thought ?

I would say in reply : Let us pass over the difficulty of defining what is lyrical poetry, alluded to by Professor Palgrave in his Preface to the *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*, and let us also pass over the enormous drift of lyrical verse that passes week by week through the European journals and magazines. That wonderful output of so-called Poetry makes one wonder that

¹ See Professor Moulton's analyses of it.

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some clever man does not invent a machine, like the kaleidoscope of our childhood, by which a few fragments of rhyme could be made to arrange themselves in a thousand different shapes. As Dr. Johnson said of *Ossian*: “Sir, a man might write such stuff for ever, if he would abandon his mind to it.”¹ Leaving these aside there remain those poems about which there can be no dispute; exquisite butterflies of verse which lovers of poetry have long ago pinned to their memories. Of these it will be found that many are written by Masters of Thought; they are mere coruscations of a central sun of Mind. Others are quintessences of thought, so rarely distilled that their very brilliancy obscures the presence of Mind (which is always supposed to be dull). A notable instance of this is Byron’s *Elegy on Thyrza*, on which Professor Palgrave’s note may be quoted: “A masterly example of Byron’s command of strong thought and close reasoning in verse.”²

¹ Boswell’s *Life*, vol. iii, p. 293.

² *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics*, p. 434.

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Others again belong to epochs (such as the Elizabethan) when Poetry was honoured, and all good wits sunned themselves in its rays, sometimes catching a lustre not altogether native to themselves. And a residue remains, which cannot be thus classified, and which doubtless has a charm very evasive of definition, allied to the song of birds and the tinkling of streams. These, however, are comparatively few; and who could prove that they are rooted in mere emotion, apart from all preparation of Mind? The best evidence we have points to the contrary conclusion.

Sect. (b).
GENIUS IMPLIES
A PASSIONATE
SPECIAL DILIG-
ENCE.

Not only is the natural and imperative impulse of Genius to labour—collecting, comparing, and storing up results for future use—sedulous for truth and scrupulously distrustful of common opinion—but passionate reverence for Art, which is one of its essential ingredients, leads it to the profoundest study of the material in which it has to work.

Here again exists a complete popular delusion. People recognise that they can-

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not sit down and write a sonata or even a song without understanding Harmony, though they have usually no idea of the intricacy and complexity of musical prosody, nor of the task that the discovery of the scale and the slow development of centuries have left behind them. But they are accustomed to think of Poetry that, if they had the gift, they could take up their pen and write a poem whenever they feel inclined.

The source of this strange error is not difficult to perceive. Music deals with sound and its combinations, and seems, superficially considered, to be alien from every-day life ; though this also is an error ; for, if it were true, music would not be an Art, but a Science. Poetry, on the contrary, deals with language ; that is, with the same medium as every-day speech and every-day reading and writing ; hence it is easy to see how unthoughtful persons spring to the conclusion that, if they had the gift, nothing could be more simple than to manipulate this material of language, ready to their tongues and

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familiar from their childhood, into the form of Poetry.

The true deduction is precisely the opposite, and part of the gift itself is to recognise that ordinary speech and ordinary reading and writing are the deadliest enemies of poetic diction. Everything that Poetry requires is lacking in common conversation, and everything is present in common conversation that Poetry must reject. Popular speech omits the finer and broader sounds of the language, and chooses those that are more easily and quickly produced. It has a very small vocabulary, and makes up for the want of the right word by using some other in a false sense. Thus it employs the same phrase to mean a dozen different things; depending on association or inflexion of voice to convey the intended meaning; and hence words get attached to each other as if they were manacled together and never could be separated, gradually losing their identity, and existing only in that helpless condition.¹

¹ A notable instance is the phrase “condign punishment.” How many persons, I wonder, know the meaning of the adjective?

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Common language is always fluctuating, with constant tendency to a debasement both of meaning and pronunciation, so that many words and expressions, once of noble signification and dignified sound, become ghosts of themselves and unfit for any purpose except chatter; loss of significance being due to ignorance, and loss of sound to lingual laziness; because the so-called “throwing back of the accent” is the result of a disinclination to articulate all the syllables properly. Exaggeration, paradox, ugly concatenations of phraseology, avoidance of any sustained effort of reasoning, ill-constructed sentences, and a delight in all that is opposed to precision and order of intellect are a few among the multitude of defects and blemishes characteristic of the “vulgar tongue” among all classes; which phrase itself gives a good example of that constant depreciation of the value of words to which I have alluded.

These and a thousand other pitfalls the poet must avoid, before he can obtain balance, refinement, subtle adjustment, and modulation

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in his work. In short, he has to unlearn the mode of speech he is accustomed to, and learn another—the poetic mode—and in this mode he must learn to think; since no one can adequately express himself, except in the mode in which he is in the habit of thinking.

It is because of their jealous conservation of all that makes language an exact instrument for the transmission of Thought—of the true signification of words and their shades of difference, of their proper inflections and arrangements in stately sentences and periods—that Dr. Johnson said: “It is the poets that preserve languages.”¹

“For what is Poetry, so far as its form is concerned, but the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things?”² asked Matthew Arnold. Or is it not true, rather, to say that it is the natural mode of impassioned speech; that it must have had its origin in impassioned speech; and that if we lived in a

¹ Boswell's *Life*, vol. II, p. 318.

² *Essays in Criticism*, p. 187.

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world where nothing was said except what is worth saying, we should all speak in Poetry, as the only means of communicating our intellectual joys ; just as we should all sing rather than speak, as the only way of giving emotional force to our utterance ? For singing, in like manner, must have been derived from the various intonations of the human voice in moments of excitement and exaltation. Whence otherwise could it have arisen ? For intense passion of sorrow, or love, or jealousy will turn the meanest person into a poet, a singer, and an actor. He will use a fluency and periodicity of speech of which he never dreamt ; a modulation and range of voice that he never knew he possessed ; and he will gesticulate as if he had been attending a dramatic class. Whence it appears (among other things) that instead of Opera being an outrageous combination of incongruities, it represents what we should all be doing if we lived in a world of larger scope, and our powers of expression were developed accordingly.

But it is necessary for the poet to study

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not only his own language deeply, constantly, and lovingly, but many other languages. It is true, as Goethe said, that "no man who knows only his own language knows even that";¹ which is but one more illustration of that ancient truth, quite disregarded by the world at large, that nothing can be known but by comparison and analogy. "A system built upon the discoveries of a great many minds," said Dr. Johnson, "is always of more strength than what is produced by the mere workings of any one mind, which of itself can do little; there is not so poor a book in the world that would not be a prodigious effort, were it wrought out entirely by a single mind, without the aid of prior investigators."²

In the same way the poet must "build the lofty rhyme" on the foundation laid by all the poets that have gone before him; the only necessary warning being that too great a saturation of classical poetry may cause a difficulty in understanding the principles of English rhythm; especially that of blank

¹ See *Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. II, p. 95.

² Boswell's *Life*, vol. I, p. 371.

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verse, the most difficult of all ; depending for its effect, not on one line or two lines, but on many lines—wheel within wheel, and coil about coil. Rhythm is the technique of Poetry, and a very elusive one it is. But here again the poet is at a disadvantage compared with other artists. The ear of the composer must, no doubt, be trained to hear sounds that common ears do not hear, and the eye of the painter must be trained to see colours that common eyes do not see ; but the poet must not only train himself in the rhythms of the greatest poetry, but he must disentangle himself from the prevailing and pervading falsity of the rhythm of ordinary speech and ordinary poetry. He is in the position of a painter compelled to live in a room hung with wretched paintings, or a musician obliged to listen all day to a barrel-organ. Moreover, he has to attempt a technique that has never yet been reduced to any elementary system, by which to attain practice and experience. The book on the rudiments of English Prosody has yet to be written ; there is nothing answering to the

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perspective and colour technique of painting, or the harmony, thorough-bass, counter-point, and fugue of music. Ever since Campion's *Observations on the Art of English Poetry*, written to prove that the use of rhyme should be discontinued, and that English metre should be fashioned after classical models, and Samuel Daniel's answer, *The Defence of Rhyme*, written in 1602,¹ many preliminary treatises have appeared on the subject;² but none of them could be placed in the hands of the young poet as a conclusive primer of instruction; though I can see no reason why the poetic neophyte should not exercise himself in non-sense verses, as is done in the learning of Latin Poetry, and I propose on some other occasion to give specimens of these.

¹ *Lyrics from Elizabethan Song Books*, edited by A. H. Bullen, p. xviii.

² Dr. Johnson's Prefix to his *Dictionary*; S. T. Coleridge's Preface to *Christabel*; Edgar Poe's Preface to *The Raven*; Ruskin's *English Prosody*; F. W. H. Myer's *Essays Modern*; Robert Bridge's Preface to *Prometheus the Fire-giver*, and his *Milton's Prosody*; J. A. Symonds' *Blank Verse*; the Appendix to Mackinnon Robertson's *Essays*; Sydney Lanier's *Science of English Verse*; J. B. Mayor's *Chapters on English Metre*; C. Whitcomb's *Structure of English Verse*, &c., &c.

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The treatise on which pupils of the Muse may be grounded will not be written until prosody experts cease to analyse English verse as if English were a dead language. Even to analyse Greek and Latin Poetry by the rigid metrical scheme of syllabic quantity is to exclude from analysis the chief element that constitutes the beauty of the verse ; for if the beauty of poetry in modulation of sound be omitted, what remains ? Even classical poetry ought, as far as possible, to be analysed as if the language in which it was written were alive ; for what would even a pedant say if we were to read Virgil or Homer to him according to the strict metrical measure of the hexameter line ? He would surely stop his ears to the dreadful monotony. We must read Greek and Latin Poetry without slavish regard to the quantity of the syllables, but with attention to the variation of beats or stresses which coincide with the sense ; for therein lies the charm of the verse.

But if this be true of classical, still more is it true of our vernacular poetry ; for the discovery, first of alliterative verse and then

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of rhyme, raised the value of rhythmic beat or stress far beyond that of syllabic quantity ; so that to Anglicise Latin verse, as the monks did in their hymns, is to emphasise stress or beat at the expense of quantity, while to Latinise English verse, as was so nobly done in Mr. William Watson's *Hymn to the Sea*, is to give quantity a prevalence over stress, which, in the course of the natural growth of English Poetry, it has lost. The nearest approach to an organic combination of both modes is, I suppose, to be found in our blank verse, as developed by Marlowe and Milton ; which is accordingly the most dangerous form of all for the novice to attempt.

Poetry, no doubt, cannot in one sense be learnt ; but neither, in the same sense, can Music or Sculpture or Architecture or Painting. But it is a deplorable mistake, and one by no means in the true interests of poetry, to allow it to be assumed that even the greatest Genius is exempt from the obligations of learning the potentialities and limitations of the material he has to deal with. Even a Genius great enough to be able to expand the

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supposed limits of his Art can only do so by first learning them. He must know the laws before he can transgress them with any good result, because he must know which he ought to transgress, and exactly how to do it, before his heresy can prove, not anarchy, but the discovery of a more comprehensive rule.

It is in accordance with all history that *Sac. (c).*

the bearers of joy to Man should themselves suffer, and that Man should refuse the joy.

GENIUS IMPLIES
A PASSIONATE
PATIENCE.

To be despised and rejected is the natural fate of any one who is in any sense a prophet. But it is generally supposed that the actual production of a poem must at all events be a pleasurable sensation—a relief of pent up emotion. This, however, is far from being the case, when the poem is more than the result of a passing spasm of the mind, and needs a long-sustained cerebral tension for its complete realisation.

“To attain or approach perfection,” says Matthew Arnold, “in the region of thought and feeling, and to unite this with perfection of form demands, not merely an

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effort and a labour, but an actual tearing of one's self to pieces which one does not readily consent to (although one is sometimes forced to it) unless one can devote one's whole life to Poetry. Wordsworth could give his whole life to it, Shelley and Byron both could, and were besides driven by their demon to do so. . . . Of the moderns Goethe is the only one, I think, of those who have had an *existence assujettie*, who has thrown himself, with a great result, into Poetry. And even he felt what I say, for no doubt he could have done more *poetically* had he been freer; but it is not so light a matter, when you have other grave claims on your powers, to submit voluntarily to the exhaustion of the best poetical production. . . . It is only in the best poetical epochs (such as the Elizabethan) that you can descend into yourself and produce the best of your thought and feeling naturally and without an overwhelming, and, in some degree, morbid effort."¹

But this is by no means the opinion of

¹ *Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 62-63.

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the world. Epoch or no epoch, the commercial mind, conscious of the endurance of irksome routine and of a complete absorption of intellect and energy in its work, continues to estimate even the prose writer's occupation as more allied to pastime than labour, some exception being made as to journalism, because newspapers are a commodity and command a market. Much more does the man of Offices think of poetry as a pleasant distraction to the writer, and, for that very reason, a foolish pursuit, even though bread and butter are in question; for how can a man expect to be well paid for amusing himself?

Oliver Goldsmith was driven by his misery to write: "Poetry is a much easier and more agreeable species of composition than prose, and could a man live by it, it were not unpleasant employment to be a poet."¹

Poor Oliver! It was more pleasant, no doubt, to write *The Deserted Village* than to slave, at a pittance, to invent Natural

¹ *Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*, by J. Forster, vol. i, pp. 1-3.

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History! The true poet's demon always deceives him with mirages of date-palms and limpid lakes; but when the fiend has got him fairly into the wilderness, what torments does he not inflict! Not even the prose that approaches nearest to poetry can compel the same intensity of prolonged concentration, the same gathering up of the whole spirit of the man, the same mortal consciousness afterwards that virtue has gone out of him. Moreover, the sternest and most exacting exercise of the will is then required to control the violent access of sensibility that accompanies this orgasm of the mind; because it is necessary for the best work that the poet (who, during these periods, is in the eyes of the world a monomaniac) should never lose command of his judgment, never remit for one moment the self-criticism for which his long years of study have fitted him. Nothing but a special passionate patience can enable a man to sustain the prolonged effort, necessary for all fine work, of complete abstraction from the world and from himself. The terrible

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pressure of common thought and common feeling weighs on his spirits like a fog ; the daily interruptions and vexations of life attrite him ; and the very subject that he has chosen for his theme looms before him, like the entrance into a subterranean cavern from which there is no known exit. Again and again his spirit fails him ; again and again the irruption of vulgar images breaks the atmosphere with which he has striven to surround his mind ; again and again he loses the thread of clear conception that is his only guide through the dark and difficult places. It is impossible to describe the pains and terrors that lay hold on him, the furies that he grapples, the discouragement and despair that he pierces, with no other weapon than the consecrated sword of a chivalrous reverence for his Art.

The sea, at its “priestly task,”—the sea, always gazing upwards, always reflecting light, always receiving from all sources, and always restoring and replenishing them itself,—the deep, surface-troubled sea is a fair emblem of the Poet ; but in no respect more

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so than in "the passion and patience" of it, to borrow Mr. Swinburne's fine phrase.¹

If the profession of Poetry be shown to demand labour, honest, severe, and prolonged, the question whether indolent Genius ever achieved success is of small moment. Certainly it never achieved it *because* of indolence; certainly no amount of idleness ever gave birth to Genius. It is, at least, much more true to say that hard work is an intrinsic tendency of Genius than it is to say that Genius is independent of hard work.

I know of no more vivid picture of the life of literary discipline than the one Mr. Pater has drawn for us in his *Marius the Epicurean*. His character of Flavian is no doubt that of a youth who, by the assiduous cultivation of literary manner, lays himself open to a charge of euphuism, and of this Mr. Pater himself seems to have been well aware;² yet I scarcely think that the picture

¹ *Essay on Blake*.

² "Fastidious employment of language," he says, "will always be saved from lapsing into mere artifice by an uncompromising demand for a matter, in all Art,

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is overdrawn of the necessity of studying language for the poetical expression of thought, even if it must be admitted that Mr. Pater did not make the training of Taste sufficiently subservient to the training of Imagination, a word which he very rarely uses. The whole description (though vivid, somewhat diffuse) of Flavian's self-education in literary art is too long for quotation.¹ I must only cull a few passages.

We are told that the young man "set himself to determine his bearings, as by compass, in the world of thought; to get that precise acquaintance with the creative intelligence itself, its structure and capacity, its relation to other parts of himself and to other things, without which no poetry can

derived immediately from lively personal intuition and constant appeal to individual judgment."—*Op. cit. vol. 1,* p. III.

¹ *Ibid.* pp. 103–169. It is, perhaps, but a delicate enlargement of Bacon's words: "Poesy is part of learning, in measure of words for the most part restrained, but in all other points extremely licensed, and doth truly refer to the imagination."—*The Advancement of Learning*, iii, 4.

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be masterly. . . . Curiosity impelled him to certain severe studies, in which his earlier religious conscience seemed still to survive, as a principle of hieratic scrupulousness or integrity of thought regarding this new service to intellectual light. . . . With men of his vocation people were apt to say words were things. Well, with him words should be indeed things—the word, the phrase valuable in exact proportion to the transparency with which it conveyed to others the apprehension, the emotion, the mood, so vividly real within himself. . . . Others might brutalise or neglect the native speech, that true ‘open field’ for charm and sway over men. He would make of it a serious study, weighing the precise power of every phrase and word, as though it were precious metal, disentangling the later associations and going back to the original and native sense of each—restoring to full significance all its wealth of latent figurative expression, reviving or replacing its outworn or tarnished images. . . . Already he blamed instinctively, alike in his work and in him-

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self, as youth so seldom does, all that had not passed a long and liberal process of erasure. The happy phrase or sentence was really modelled upon a cleanly finished structure of scrupulous thought."

Poetry, to be "masterly," demands a "conscientious scrupulousness" of thought and language, only to be attained by severe study; that is the pith of the literary training suggested by Mr. Pater. Would indeed there were more of it! For a great part of modern poetry is not so much an honest gestation and parturition of the mind as a juggling reproduction of the prejudices and ignorances of an audience.

But, in truth, the tradition that Genius is a law unto itself and possesses a ready-made equipment for the finest and most perfect expression, has on Poetry an effect inconceivably pernicious. While the poor prose-man, even if he only aims at a journalistic engagement, must at least learn grammar, practise some kind of style, and exercise himself in a fatal facility, the poetic Genius, by virtue of his occult and esoteric

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talisman, is supposed to stand already seized and possessed of every qualification necessary for his Art, and has nothing to do but to wander about on mountains, and scribble on the backs of envelopes. He only has to give his Aladdin's Lamp a rub—the necessary friction being produced, perhaps by a bottle of wine, perhaps by a flirtation, or perhaps by a liver pill—and, hey presto ! his obsequious Genius is in attendance, not only ready to transport him into the realms of Poetry, but prepared to describe them to the nearest typewriter.

From this ludicrous superstition, which is merely a survival from the days of the Pythoness of Apollo, the Delphian Priestess, and the Witch of Endor (whose mantles afterwards fell on sacred bards), two evils result, which act and re-act on each other.

The first is that men and women who toil, as the great majority do, instinctively refuse to reverence any vocation, however mysterious it may be, in which little or no expenditure of toil is required. Two things they revere—utility and success; utility because it repre-

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sents money, success because it makes money. They are not convinced of the utility of the poet, and they are inclined to grudge his success, because they have been taught to believe that he gains it by droning rather than by honeying.

The other evil is this, that just as the Stage attracts idle and worthless characters, because of its false reputation for excitement and easy success, so Poetry attracts crowds of people who fancy that they have the one thing needful, Genius ; while, in fact, they have only a disordered state of the nervous system, which makes them incapable of any plain and unemotional labour.

Hence it occurs that the more the world suspects the worth of Poetry and the industry of its makers, the more the poets themselves exalt the gift of Genius ; and the more this is exalted, the greater is the inrush of neurotic versifiers.

For even the genuine poet—born, bred, and self-educated—finding the russet garments of the dignity of workmanship falling from him, thinks himself forced to assume the

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robes of a priest of the Parnassian mysteries, and diligently conceals the clothes stained with honest toil under the spotless surplice of Inspiration. He is driven to a foolish denial of his long novitiate, with its learnings and unlearnings, its languages, technicalities, and prosodies ; of his study of verse-architecture, his experiments in metre, his slow discovery of the secrets of antithetical sound and the involutions of phrase within phrase, his painful storings of accurate knowledge, his ponderings over subjects and workings out of their elaborate balancings ; his thousand abortive attempts, his abandonment of what cost him so dearly, and his destructions of his own offspring. It is impossible to complete the catalogue of the travail of his mind, to say nothing of the travail of his soul. Yet not for these does he claim the world's respect, but for Genius, forsooth ! with the natural result that Poetry itself is degraded, and every charlatan under the sun encouraged to masquerade as belonging to its Order.

The truth is that the soil must be sown with knowledge, or there will be nothing

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for the wind of inspiration to fructify, and there is no reason whatever why there should not be students of Poetry, as well as students of Music or Painting. The number of them that would become poets is neither more nor less easily calculated than the number of Sir Hubert Parry's pupils who become composers, or of Professor Herkomer's pupils who become painters. Whether all the complexity of successful Genius, including a passionate and determined love of Art, which is the first requisite, be present, Time only, as a rule, will show.

For when the student of Poetry has laid the groundwork and endured the discipline, has studied his language—its shades of meaning, its combination of sounds, its range of expression ; when to this he has added foreign languages, studied in the same way ; when he has analysed Poetry in many tongues, and become master of its laws ; when he has laid up in his mind treasures of Philosophy, Science, Art, Religion, Sociology, Politics, and all that appertains to

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Human Life and Nature, there will always remain the question, Has he the artistic vision? Can he perceive with his mind's sensibility that soul of Life and Nature of which the world is ignorant, or will the perception of it impregnate his intellect with passionate utterance? And even if, so far, all be well with him, has he indomitable perseverance and persistence to live that Life of Vision, never relaxing the effort needed to combat the world's equally persistent endeavour to blind him, to cast dust in his eyes, to stop his ears with mud, and to harden his perception into a mirror of ephemeral events? Will he dare to endure, in loneliness—another Alastor—that intellectual pain, worse than physical pain, as even poor scrofulous Dr. Johnson knew,¹ which he who regards the world intellectually is surely doomed to suffer? Will he face the contemptuous pity of his relatives, the insinuations of his friends that he is following a Jack-o'-lantern, and a probable invitation of the wife of his bosom to "curse

¹ Boswell's *Life*, vol. II, p. 438, note 2.

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God and die"—that is, to abandon the integrity of his intellect and make terms with the God of Time, the Fiend of the "profound knowledge of surfaces?" In short, will he submit to martyrdom in the cause of Imagination, and be nailed to the cross by the World, for maintaining that God is not to be found in Religion, nor Wisdom in Politics, nor Wealth in Commerce, nor Joy in Pleasure?

Last of all, but far from least, will he, whether he be poor or rich, engrave on his heart those grand words of Marcus Aurelius: "Art thou not content that thou hast done something conformable to thy nature, and dost thou seek to be paid for it, just as if the eye demanded a recompense for seeing or the feet for walking?"¹

From these and the like considerations, *Sec. (d).* it is now, I hope plentifully apparent that if the word Genius be used to express shortly a very complex quantity, as mathematicians use a symbol to signify an intricate

CONCLUSION.

¹ Quoted by Matthew Arnold in his *Essays in Criticism*, p. 427.

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equation, there need be nothing misleading in it. But when it is employed to denote a magical power, absolved from all the conditions of ordinary human intellect, subsisting rather on a diet of dreams than a fare of wholesome knowledge, what can be expected but a false conclusion, with all its train of disastrous consequences ?

In arguing that, whatever Genius may be, it is not emancipated from the common law of labour, it has not been necessary to attempt any definition of this reputed Fourth Dimension of Mind. Is it then indefinable ? If it be a complex quantity it is necessarily indefinable, except by analysis ; but I think that a liberal process of elimination would speedily reduce it to this essential residue, namely, the intimate action of sensibility on intellect. Probably both the sensibility and the intellect would be found greater than the average or normal ; certainly both need to be severely disciplined ; but it is the intimate connection of the two that is at least the chief part of what we call Genius. Sense and sensibility are not as antagonistic

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as Miss Austen fancied, though if she had written *sensitiveness* her theory would have been correct ; for in the great majority of people sensation is not united to intellect, but is merely felt as waves of emotion, often merging into hysteria, having no relation to thought at all ; or else, in the service of material objects, the mind is kept severely apart from all sensuous experience, in order that it may preserve the necessary cruelty for the successful conduct of Business ; which, however, will not prevent a man leading a sensual life, carefully walled off from his business career.

If in the main this is a true account of Genius—that the delicate impressions received by a fine sensibility are transmuted into intellectual forms—there seems no good reason why some such term as *intellectual passion* might not be used in the place of a word so misleading and so detrimental to the interests of Art.

Unfortunately the atavism of the Medicine-man is with us still, and the one thing we fancy we really understand is a mystery ;

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which is, I suppose, the reason why we love to call and make things mysterious. We may be quite unable to follow the simplest reasoning beyond twice two makes four ; the proposition that, if A and C are equal to B, they are equal to one another, may be outside our mental range ; but give us a mystery, and we can understand that at once. The elementary truth that any two sides of a triangle are greater than the third side might take us months of consideration to realise ; but Genius ? yes, of course we know what Genius is !

To define intellectual passion would be quite as difficult, no doubt ; but the phrase has at least the merit of referring the mystery back to its true source, the mind, instead of implying some power extraneous to the mind, and thereby encouraging all kinds of pretenders, who claim to make up for their lack of mind and their lack of discipline by their possession of Genius; degrading Art, and Poetry in particular, to the level of a juggling trick.

Intellectual passion is not only an unfamiliar name for the hatching-ground of

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imagination, but it is doubtful whether there is any general recognition of such a mental quality, which, nevertheless, is reflected in all great poetry. Matthew Arnold possessed it in a very high degree, and for that very reason is not yet appreciated. I doubt if any poem can rival *Mycerinus* in rare suffusion of mind-passion, and not long ago one of our greatest living poets, after reading it to me, himself fell into a passion of tears. Yet Matthew Arnold's poetry is often called cold. If it be so, it is with the coldness of white flame, which scorches like an arctic wind. It is certainly free from that humid and enervating characteristic of most modern Poetry, noted by S. T. Coleridge,—“the anxiety to be always striking. . . . Every line, nay, every word stops, looks full in your face, and asks and *begs* for praise. As in a Chinese painting, there are no distances, no perspective, but all is in the foreground, and this is nothing but vanity. . . . The desire of carrying things to a greater height of pleasure and admiration than, *omnibus trutinatis*, they are suscep-

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tible of, is one great cause of the corruption of Poetry.”¹

But criticism is no part of my purpose. I merely wish to lay the utmost stress on the great harm that accrues to Art, and most of all to Poetry, from the common tradition and superstition concerning Genius. A careful consideration of the matter would, I am certain, prove that the compound quality we so name is an agglomeration, of which the central and attracting portion is imagination, the product of a passionate intellect, sustained and elevated by wide and deliberate study. The true poet has “a soul for which conversation with itself is a necessity of existence.”² But what pains ought he not to take that this conversation should be worthy and effectual?

It will be a jubilee day for Poetry when this is recognised and acknowledged; for not till then shall we be able to reprove the depreciation of the Poet by quoting the plain,

¹ See *Anima Poetae*, edited by E. H. Coleridge, p. 165.

² *Marius the Epicurean*, by W. Pater, vol. II, p. 50.

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straightforward words from *Tom Brown's School-Days*: "Remember that he has found something in the world which he will fight and suffer for, which is just what you have got to do."¹

¹ P. 184.

CHAPTER IV

THROUGH FALSE VALUE SET ON POPULAR JUDGMENT

BESIDES the paralysing fallacy of Genius, another is prevalent almost as foolish, but lacking, hitherto, the dignity of a precise name. If the poet is supposed to be endowed with a strange and inexplicable power of composition, the public is also credited with an equally strange power of criticism.

We constantly hear that the Public is the Judge—said quite reverently, as if it were a sacred aphorism. Every true artist knows that this is false; except in the commercial sense, that the Public pays for what it likes and declines to pay for what it dislikes or cannot appreciate, and that those who choose Art for a livelihood are compelled to bid for immediate public favour. But their

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Art is none the better for that ; on the contrary, it is much the worse. "On inadequate ideas," says Matthew Arnold, "reposes and must repose the general practice of the world ;" ¹ or, in other words, ignorance produces erroneous opinions, the effect of which is seen in every-day life.

Even in such a matter as daily food, vital to so many millions, we see the public following an injurious habit based on an unworthy imitation of those who can purchase as much meat as they please. The daily bread of the rich is an unnourishing starch, from which the best part of the wheat has been extracted and given to the pigs ; but what are we to say of the wisdom of the multitude, whose chief sustenance depends on bread, when we see them demanding the same kind of bread, simply because it is eaten by those whose table is loaded with other nourishment ? Or consider the feeding of infants, and the enormous mortality caused by the sentimental belief that maternal instinct alone teaches a woman how to feed her baby.

¹ *Essays in Criticism*, p. 29.

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If in such universal matters as these, the regulation of which does not lie beyond the range of mere common sense, the Public proves itself totally incapable of avoiding grievous error, much more surely will inferior performance follow, if Poetry and Art are governed by popular opinion ; because these are affairs enormously more difficult to estimate than those of common existence.

If a poor man chooses to take up literature as a profession, he cannot be blamed, individually, for playing the mountebank to please the Public. But there is always this to be said, that a man may make a livelihood in other ways, with the advantage of not searing his conscience ; he may leave literature to those who are well enough off to command the leisure necessary for the severe mental labour that the conscientious pursuit of it entails.

This pernicious fallacy, that the mob is a competent judge of literature and art, instead of being merely a chance collection of persons who reluctantly pay fees to be amused (or horrified—it is all one), is, like all fallacies,

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a prolific breeder of others. Thus it results that those who are sufficiently well off to lead an idle life, if they choose, are liable to be sneered at as amateurs if they follow Literature or Art as a profession. But if they know their business thoroughly, and work at it honestly, they ought to be held even in higher esteem than those whose motive is to make money ; especially as their position enables them to produce their best, independently of popular demands. They alone, it would appear, can hold themselves in the true artistic position towards the Public—not the menial situation of caterers of dainty flummeryes or condimental curries, but the office of Ministers of Imagination. The poor man who is true to that task is worthy of our admiration most of all ; but he will probably remain poor ; for they alone who have injured their eyes with tears in the attempt, know how bitterly the common crowd resents the faintest suspicion of being persuaded to think. But the torch is handed on, somehow, though the feet of the bearers are bloody.

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Paradoxical as it may seem, the truth is, that while the public search is always for the excitement of novelty, the popular novelty when examined always turns out to be an old friend in new clothes. *Réchauffer* is the secret of pleasing an audience. The great majority of those who approach Literature or Art at all, approach it in order to have their predilections, prejudices, and opinions gratified. This soothes their vanity. They feel on a level with the author, and even fancy that they could have done as much themselves, with a little practice. The idea that they owe anything to him, except the fees, never so much as enters their heads. On the contrary, they think they do him a great favour to pay him, not only fees, but attention; nor can they perceive the insult offered them by palming off a patchwork of old rags for a texture newly woven in the mind-loom. They have never, in fact, acquired the knowledge to enable them to tell whether a literary or artistic work possesses new elements or not, nor can they explain to themselves the real reason why it

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gives them pleasure,—namely, its disguised familiarity. Thus the commercial relation between the Public and the poor Artist places them both in a certain false position, and one that is detrimental to Literature and Art only in the second degree to the supposed irresponsibility of Genius ; because it is only by a Herculean effort that unfamiliar work can be introduced to the Public at all.

It will be objected that, after all, the works of great masters have become popular and remain so. The answer is, that their popularity is the fashion ; it has gradually become a mark of social inferiority not to admire them. Sometimes the enthusiasm of Princes, like the late King of Bavaria, has procured this result ; sometimes the constant reference to a writer in novels and newspapers has produced an admiration by proxy ; sometimes a good author's worst characteristics have gained him notoriety ; and sometimes the pomp and circumstance of the Stage has lent a value to that which would otherwise remain comparatively un-

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esteemed. The public never yet found out fine work for itself. Every true artist, on achieving some chance measure of applause, immediately trembles and takes himself to task for having probably written something unworthy of his high calling. For if indeed a medley of persons, the majority of whom have never studied imagination or nobility, possesses a mysterious sense of what is noble and imaginative, of what use would be the critics?

Critics—those, at least, who have a commission on the staff—are assumed to be well qualified; to have studied Criticism, as assiduously as the poet studies Poetry. That being so, they will be bad or good critics exactly in the ratio of their subservience to public opinion or the reverse. For the critic to follow or give expression to public opinion is to abdicate his critical function.

It must not be supposed that in this view there is any inconsiderate scorn of general or average opinion. Opinion in the individual is rightly disregarded. What men look for is knowledge and trained discrimi-

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nation. Nevertheless, opinion in the mass gathers a certain momentum, that, however intrinsically fictitious, is irresistibly impressive. All that I wish to combat is that Literature and Art are so enormously different from other human affairs that *therefore* common opinion is especially competent to estimate them; that the Poet has a kind of sixth sense, and that the Public has a corresponding one, exactly adapted for discerning whether a writer possesses that idiosyncrasy or not. Let us rather reduce Poetry to the level of other expressions of Mind, and also reduce the Public to their proper relative position thereto,—namely, that in as far as they have studied it, and no farther, they are entitled to pronounce judgment.

I am not unaware that Poetry is supposed to give expression to human emotion, and that consequently human emotion may be accepted as a measure and test of Poetry. But I hold that common human emotion is a very worthless influence; that it is a wild, blind, furious passion, the parent of a large part of the world's misery, and that it is the

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most sacred function of Poetry to pass this emotion through the alembic of Mind and to transmute it into passionate Thought. It is no wonder that Max Nordau suffers from such an obsession of the idea of degeneration, since he states, as if it were unanswerable, that the task of Art is to excite emotion.¹ It is impossible for me to express within the limits of this book how false I hold that statement to be; for not only do I believe that every form of Art is inferior or superior according to the degree in which it translates human emotion into Thought, and therefore that Poetry is the highest Art of all, but I believe that the mere artistic reproduction of common human emotion is a debauchery, and that it is of the very essence of true Art that it should reflect emotion in the form of Imagination.

¹ *Degeneration*, p. 83.

CHAPTER V

THROUGH WANT OF ENCOURAGEMENT

WE have seen how Poetry fails of its chief purpose in the world, namely, to stimulate and guide the human Imagination (which is the true source of Love and Joy, and the condition of all just understanding) by reason of the burden of Commercialism under which it labours, by reason of the common loss of the sense of Relation and Proportion, by reason of the popular false idea of Genius, and by reason of the false value attached to popular opinion.

There is, however, yet another reason, more mundane, no doubt, but also potent —the want of encouragement among the highest and most educated classes.

I have heard a great deal of folly talked among literary men concerning the satisfaction of writing for writing's sake. In the

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first place, this is very far from the publisher's view of the matter; and in the next place, men will not climb mountains only to arrive in a fog. Some sunshine of appreciation is as necessary to the artistic frailty as to the commercial heroism.

To my mind, poets ought always to be of the courage of Socrates, who, when his countrymen had found him guilty of perverting the laws of his country, by striving to teach them Intellectual Joy, instead of acceding to the expectation of his judges by pleading in mitigation of the prescribed penalty of death, invited them to apportion him a lodging in the Prytaneum or Public Alms-house, in recompense for his great toil on their behalf.

The insolent neglect, not to say, intolerance, of persons in high places, towards poets and their works, is not, as they fondly imagine, a sign of manliness, but of want of education.

Instances, no doubt, may be alleged to the contrary, and the subject is too controversial for present treatment; but a general

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and just encouragement of poetry is one thing and an exceptional honouring of an individual poet is another. I am not too old to remember when it was supposed, generally throughout England, that the Poet-Laureate had himself invented the tale of King Arthur and his Knights !

But, in truth, the Contempt of poets and poetry is by no means modern. Plato says : "There is a quarrel of long standing between Philosophy and Poetry, and we must not make a serious pursuit of Poetry in the belief that it grasps truth and is good." He considered that proof was required that Poetry is "not only pleasurable, but also profitable in its bearings upon governments and upon human life, before it ought to be admitted into the State."¹

The proposal was to expel poets from the Ideal State : "It is probable," writes Plato, in another place, "that if a man should arrive in our city, so clever as to be able to assume any character and imitate any object, and should propose to make a public

¹ Plato's *Republic*, pp. 352-353.

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display of his talents and his productions, we should pay him reverence as a sacred, admirable, and charming person ; but we should tell him that in our state there is no one like him, and that our law excludes such characters, and we should send him away to another city after pouring perfumed oil upon his head, and crowning him with woollen fillets.”¹ Truly an admirable kind of poet-laureateship, when used with discretion !

But to apply the *taboo* to Poetry is a far greater compliment to it than to ignore it or be ignorant of it, for at least it acknowledges its power and influence. Nowadays people deprecate it who have never studied it, and have not even mastered the right mode of reading it ; or they choose to use it as a diversion, and thence conclude that it is incapable of any greater importance. “ You know,” said Walpole, “ how I shun authors,

¹ Plato's *Republic*, pp. 91–92. I am, however, well aware of the modifications of Plato's meaning maintained by Professor Jowett. See *Republic of Plato*, 3rd edition, pp. clvii–clxv.

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and would never have been one myself if it obliged me to keep such bad company. They are always in earnest, and think their profession serious."¹ Such an opinion is simply immoral. Why should not authors be serious? or rather, how dare they be anything else?

Very serious indeed is literature to many, from the bread and butter point of view, as it was to poor Goldsmith. "You and I have very different motives for resorting to the stage; I write for money and care little about fame," said Goldsmith sorrowfully to Cumberland.² But above and beyond the question of what good a man's profession may be to him, what good can he be to his profession, or his profession to his country, unless he is serious in it?

William Hazlitt had a different explanation of artistic enthusiasm: "The same reason," he says, "makes a man a religious enthusiast that makes a man an enthusiast in

¹ *Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*, by J. Forster, vol. i, p. 139.

² *Ibid*, vol. ii, p. 302.

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any other way—an uncomfortable mind in an uncomfortable body. Poets, authors, and artists in general have been ridiculed for a pining, puritanical, poverty-struck appearance, which has been attributed to their real poverty. But it would perhaps be nearer the truth to say that their being poets, artists, &c., has been owing to their original poverty of spirit and weakness of constitution. As a general rule, those who are dissatisfied with themselves will seek to go out of themselves into an ideal world. Persons in strong health and spirits who take plenty of air and exercise, who are 'in favour with their stars,' and have a thorough relish for the good things of this life, seldom devote themselves in despair to Religion or the Muses."¹

This might be called *A Remedy against Poetry*; but it is at least conceivable that "a thorough relish of the good things of this life" may tend to deaden strenuous effort of any kind, except the effort to get them; though I confess I have yet to meet the

¹ *The Round Table*, p. 62.

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poet who has not a very lively appreciation of them.

Hazlitt, however, must not be taken too seriously. Yet I think very much the same idea prevails now, though not expressed in the same way. The great majority of people esteem poets much as domestic fools were esteemed—motley creatures, meant to make sport and increase the relish of the “good things.” Even poets themselves seem inclined to take the same view of their art. “There is nothing in life so much exaggerated as the importance of Art,” says a modern poet; and he adds, “that of course all depends on the eye of the beholder.”¹ It does, indeed! For if the poet has not the eye to perceive the dignity and responsibility of his profession, would he not be much more honestly and happily employed in digging potatoes?

On the poor in spirit a certain blessing was once pronounced; but if we want the opinion of one who certainly cannot be so

¹ *Prose Fancies*, by Richard Le Gallienne, pp. 162–163.

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classified, let us ask the Samson of literature, Carlyle, what he thinks on the subject : "Two men," he says, "I honour, and no third. First, the toil-worn Craftsman. . . . A second man I honour, and still more highly : Him who is seen toiling for the spiritually indispensable—not daily bread, but the bread of Life. Is not he, too, in his duty ; endeavouring towards inward Harmony ; revealing this, by act or by word, through all his outward endeavours, be they high or low ? highest of all, when his outward and inward endeavour are one ; when we can name him Artist ; not earthly Craftsman only, but inspired Thinker, who with heaven-made Implement conquers Heaven for us ! If the poor and humble toil that we have Food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he have Light, have Guidance, Freedom, Immortality ? " ¹

Religion, Science, and Art, these three ; but the greatest of these is Art ! To the thoughtless this may seem mystical ; it is

¹ *Sartor Resartus*, pp. 213-214.

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really only illustrative. These have always been the three great streams proceeding from human life and merging into each other ; but Art is the greatest, because it is the most absorbent, learning more from Religion and Science than they learn from her, or from each other ; besides having a very real right, through her chief gift of Poetry, to claim the perfection of language, on which the others, one in one way and one in another, so largely depend, as part of her own special study and discovery.

But she has a claim more important than these. If Religion is Faith—as she will hardly care to say she is not ; if Science is Hope,—as she principally is, though she seems ever inclined to deny it ; assuredly Art is Love. Faith, in a narrow sense, suggests the Inquisition ; Hope, in a narrow sense, suggests Vivisection ; and Love, in a narrow sense, suggests *L'Amour* ; but Art has as much right to her wider interpretation as her sisters. If Religion has her exclusions, and Science her overlappings, Art has her inclusions. What phase of life

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does she not compass, or to what portion of God's works is her study limited? Her catholicity is the only true one under the sun, as much transcending Religion's as Religion transcends Science's.



BOOK VI
RECAPITULATION IN REVERSE

CHAPTER I

CLOSING THE CIRCLE

“MEN (saith an ancient Greek sentence) are tormented by the opinions they have of things, and not by the things themselves,”¹ and truly many subjects, which appear complicated and perplexing when viewed through the haze of vague opinion, portentously increased by vain repetition, become simple and clear when we have fought our way through the mist and stand honestly face to face with them.

But singular indeed is the heavy effect of custom and tradition, and the indolent tendency of every one to believe, without verification, what his neighbour asserts. Men are like those caterpillars that are often to be seen in Southern climes, that follow each other so closely that the in-

¹ *Essays of Montaigne*, vol. II, p. 169.

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dividual is lost in the chain-like aspect of the Community. Of this kind of linear gregariousness an amusing "modern instance" may serve for exemplification: "When visiting St. Petersburg, Bismarck noticed a Guard stationed on a grass plot near nothing and apparently guarding nothing. Finally he asked the Czar why the guard was stationed there. The Czar, when his attention was called to the position of the Guard, whom he must have seen hundreds of times before, was unable to explain it, and found himself equally surprised with Bismarck. He summoned an officer, and asked of him an explanation, with much the same result. No one knew why the guard stood on the grass plot. The Czar, becoming interested to fathom this mystery, after considerable investigation it was discovered that during the reign of some previous Czar the Czarina had discovered the first violet in the middle of that grass plot. The then Czar had stationed a Guard there to prevent people from trampling on the violet, and the Guard, once established,

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had continued by force of custom ever since, although there were no longer any violets to guard.”¹

To dismiss the Guard from the grass plot should be the desire and design of every Thinker, who wishes to benefit his fellow-men; and in order to show how simple and direct are the ideas that I have been endeavouring to free from their cordon of superstition and prejudice, I shall now briefly recapitulate (for the sake of variety, in reverse order) the series of subjects that have passed under discussion.

To “fetch a compass,” or close the circuit of these lucubrations, it is only necessary to concede that the mystery of Genius is but a particular manifestation of the universal mystery of Mind, in the exercise of its higher power, Imagination. It follows that for the effectual working of this power the mind must be trained and sustained; the willingness and aptitude to undergo discipline

¹ *The Old Testament and the New Scholarship*, by John P. Peters, p. 121.

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and to undertake study being usually accompaniments of the best Genius.

The poetic Genius is by no means an exception to this rule, but on the contrary an example of it. The opposite opinion has, however, largely conduced to the low estimation in which Poetry is held as compared with so-called practical affairs; the world having committed itself to the contradiction that Genius is admirable because it need not work, and also despicable because it does not work.

The work of the Poet is divided into general and special. His general studies will be chosen in order to enlarge and enlighten his imagination; his special studies in order to improve his skill in his art. These latter will be chiefly languages and prosody; but I doubt whether music ought to be omitted; wherefore I shall take leave to make a short digression (which may serve to relieve the aridity of a final chapter) on the relation of Poetry to Music (which also suffers, in these days, great misuse and misunderstanding).

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First, according to my text, let me avow my well-considered belief that lyrical poetry has certainly not gained by its divorce from Music. Probably the fault lies chiefly at the door of the composers, especially those of the Italian school, who, as Mr. Bullen wisely said, "have regarded words as mere pegs on which to hang music."¹ The great Elizabethan lyrists clearly recognised how twin-born are "the harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse," neither did the Elizabethan composers inveigle their poets into inane doggerel ; but then the poets of those days studied the theory of music themselves and were therefore not easily deceived. Speaking of Wyatt, Professor Courthope surmises that "he was helped to his form by the circumstance that Poetry was not yet divorced from Music. Music, as we see from Castiglione's *Courtier*, was a necessary accomplishment for a gentleman. Henry VIII was passionately fond of it, and almost all Wyatt's love-lyrics were composed for the accompaniment of the lute. The dropping of the final *e* in the language

¹ Preface to *Song Books of the Elizabethan Age.*

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as spoken enabled the poet to produce extremely musical combinations of words for the purposes of singing, as appears in that most harmonious ballad *The Nut-Brown Maid.*"¹

In a similar manner Mr. Bullen writes : "It is solely with the old song books, the music books, that I have here dealt. Song-writing is now almost as completely a lost Art as play-writing. Our poets, who ought to make 'music and sweet poetry agree,' leave the writing of songs to meaner hands. Contrast the poor, thin, wretched stuff that one hears in drawing-rooms to-day with the rich, full-throated songs of Campion and Dowland. Oh what a fall is there, my countrymen ! In Elizabethan times music was 'married to immortal verse.' Let us hope that the present separation will not always continue."²

But, in the next place (though this is a subject at which I must barely glance, leaving it to some more expert proficiency

¹ *History of English Poetry*, vol. II, p. 57.

² *Op. cit.* p. 25.

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than mine), the neglect of the composition or study of music by modern poets is but a part of that general neglect of music, of which, in spite of all the noisy applause of familiar harmonies and favourite conductors, there are many sure signs; not the least being the impossibility of obtaining in England, without paying for it, the first performance of any Grand Opera, no matter by whom written. This is, however, partly due to the Musical Publishers, who are the greatest enemies of good music extant. But every Composer who is worth his salt knows that English audiences consist chiefly of two kinds of person. One kind attends musical performances because it is the fashion, and because it is a good opportunity for the women to envy or ridicule each other's costumes; the other, because their sensuous emotions crave excitement. Both are a perpetual temptation to the needy Artist to palm off on them facile and plausible imitations. In a word, the modern English demand for music (such as it is) is the demand of ignorance, not of knowledge.

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Sufficient for my immediate argument is the absence from the curriculum of even our highest Education of the Study and Composition of Music ; though I believe that digital gymnastics are occasionally permitted on the piano. Yet who will venture to gainsay Milton, when he says that the learning and hearing of "solemn and divine harmonies of music . . . if wise men and prophets be not extremely out, have" (not, be it observed, a convulsing effect, as of a Bacchanalian potion, but) "a great power over dispositions and manners, to smooth and make them gentle from rustic harshness and distempered passions" ?¹

But once more to win back to our beaten track. It is true, of course, that no one can be taught to be a poet; but it is not more true that any one can be taught to excel in any other branch of Art ; yet in all other branches the technique is accounted necessary to be learnt.

Much more necessary is it in Poetry ; for language is more difficult to mould into

¹ *On Education.*

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beautiful forms than the sculptor's clay; because, although the material of poetry, as that of vocal music, is impassioned speech, it is necessary that this should be elaborated, according to those rules which have been discovered to be effectual in giving the crude material expressive form. Nor is it the less necessary for him who may become great enough to transgress the rules that he has learnt; for not only is common language unimpassioned, and therefore a false model for either Poetry or Music, but it is clear that new departures in any art should come of knowledge, not of ignorance; of wisdom, not of folly.

But the commercial disparagement in which Poetry is held has an evil, reflexive action on poets themselves. The effort to touch the mind and excite the imagination of the Public is terribly exhausting, and the absence of encouragement, both public and private, generally disposes poets to depression of spirits. They are in consequence apt to under-estimate their own vocation, with the further reflex effect that they write with a

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feeling of unreality, which often causes poor work.

For the ill consideration in which Poetry is held women are largely responsible. They cannot be said to be yet emancipated, even in body, being still subservient to the marriage market, and hence their mind is engrossed in externals, especially their own. What they seek in Art is a distraction from thinking ; which thinking is not, however, thought, but merely waves of emotion, carrying them over vast tracts of self-pity and incoherent expectation ; and as men become infected with their hysteria (which is highly contagious) so they also seek a relief from nerve-exhaustion in Art.

Whatever nation should pass laws for the incarceration of all persons who habitually oscillate between nervous excitement and nervous exhaustion, until they should be cured by the mild enforcement of Rest and Reason, would deserve well of the World. They are a danger to the community ; parasitical, always killing what they love best.

The great need of these unfortunate beings

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is to deflect the nervous attention, which is centred on themselves and their own affairs. Some take to drinking (because alcohol is primarily and finally a narcotic), and some to drugging; others to Art. But to meet this demand, Art itself has to become neurotic and incoherent.

Women are also, for social reasons, very commercial, and therefore also religious and fond of war. The spirit of Religion is always commercial, and therefore anti-artistic. Rarely indeed does Religion preach the blessedness of poverty, or refrain from enriching herself when she can. She does not even denounce that gold-obsession of the mind, the heart, and the conscience, which is the common vice of the Age. But women, for the most part, have sympathy with this domination of Commerce; and their secret power is enormous, though they never acknowledge it, being exceeding subtle. They are powerful, not so much because they are able to confer happiness on men as because they can so easily make them wretched. It is their hysterical discontent

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that men fear, and will stretch morality and rectitude of conduct to evade.

Thus the demand for Poetry and therefore the supply fail in importance, in proportion as men attach importance to other things; and thus Poetry itself fails in its divine mission of bringing Joy into the World.

But it is not more emotion that the World needs, as Religion would have us believe, but more intellect. Joy does not lie in emotion, nor only in intellect, but in the transmutation of emotion into intellectual passion. In the best Poetry emotion and intellect are harmonised.

Religion can never rectify the common, erroneous ideas of joy, because Religion herself is sensuous rather than intellectual; neither can it ever, even if it would, be the effectual antagonist of commercialism, because commercialism is a perversion of intellect, and Religion has no means of counteracting it. Nevertheless, Thought can never be totally eluded; the attempt to set up emotion instead of reason being itself perverted thought.

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The most striking example of Religion's false ideas of joy is to be found in her views concerning the natural love between men and women, which is enshrined in the Bible in *Solomon's Song*. Man is a spirit, expressed in terms of a body, and Love is spiritual also, because it creates similar spirits. Hence it follows that Love, not Marriage, is the great central fact of human life ; the marriage rite being, at the very highest estimation, of no more spiritual value than a symbol of Love.

On this subject there has always been a certain conflict between Religion and Poetry. The former has always set up Virginity as the highest standard or model of life ; the latter regards Virginity as a mere negation, of no value ; because it is not Virginity, but Sex that affects the mental attitude of men and women towards each other.

The conflict has arisen chiefly from two causes : one is Religion's erotic fear of Love, and the other is the ecclesiastical love of authority, which finds its satisfaction in the marriage ceremony.

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Poetry holds the fear of Love to be mischievous and groundless; because Love, in fact, has conduced most largely to the joy of the human race, being a principal cause of the selection of the fittest in intellect and the putative origin of neighbourly affection.

The practical considerations on which the esteem of Love by the poets really rests, may be illustrated by the words of the man who, with all his learning, has the clearest right to speak in the name of British common-sense,—I mean Dr. Johnson. “A lady,” says Boswell, “derided the novels of the day because they treated about love. ‘It is not,’ replied our philosopher, ‘because they treat, as you call it, about love, but because they treat of nothing that they are despicable; we must not ridicule a passion which he who never felt never was happy, and he who laughs at never deserves to feel—a passion which has caused the change of empires and the loss of worlds—a passion which has inspired heroism and subdued avarice.’”¹

¹ Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, vol. v, p. 8.

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As to Religion's pretence of sanctifying Love by Holy Matrimony, the Poet insists that Love needs no sanctification, being the Institution of God, whereas Marriage is the Institution of Man. But Prophets have no need to attack Institutions, and the Poet, who is also a Prophet, contends, not against the contract of Marriage, but against the superstitious reverence in which it is commonly held; because it implies that Love, considered apart from the sanction of Marriage, is sinful; whereby the consciences of men are seared and indurated and give birth to many evil practices. For suppose that no one might eat and drink without sin, save by permission of a pope or parson, what daily devilry of indulgence would not the World be cast into. To call natural things wicked is to make wickedness natural. But this error of Religion is part of a larger one, whereby she confuses Joy with Pleasure, and perceiving the evil consequences of indulgence in pleasure, recommends pain and sorrow as antidotes. But both Religion and Art are Man's attempts to express the divinity

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within him, and hence the joy which Art seeks to bring into the World by means of Imagination is as sacred as sorrow.

The prophecies of Poetry concerning Joy and Love are part of her appeal to the reason of Humanity, as against the authority of Religion. No matter how far we penetrate into the past, Poetry will be found always to exercise this office as part of her divine prerogative; though nowhere, perhaps, does the poet appear with such credentials, as God's accredited agent for the correction of Orthodox Religion, as in the *Book of Job*.

Job appears from many considerations to be no less than a type of Mankind; claiming that Humanity, not Religion, is the revelation of God; a truth easily realised by the necessary admission that Man made Religion, not Religion Man. Religion, however, forgets this, and worships itself, rather than God as revealed in Life. That the right of Revelation belongs to Humanity—the whole human race, as it was, is, and shall be—and only to Religion through Humanity, is a truth un-

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mistakably declared by the Scriptures, and
chiefly by the *Book of Job*.

The friends of Job, representing the orthodox Church of their day, laid vehement claim to an authoritative and final knowledge of the character of God. Job as vehemently denies their claim and their knowledge. His constant cry is : "The God I worship has not that character." He is, in fact, heretical ; and thus heresy is included in the canon of Scripture as one of the divine influences ; for Job is vindicated by God, and rewarded for his heterodoxy.

Once for all, in the *Book of Job*, is the theory upset that an obstinate questioning of God's dealings with Man angers him, while an unreasoning submission pleases him. Once for all, it is shown that the first attitude of mind implies a higher faith than the second. The pusillanimous desire to find favour with God by defending his Providence, as it appears to our finite senses, is for ever condemned ; while Tradition, Doctrine, and Theology, being but issues from Man himself, are deprived of their supposed privilege of a final

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exposition of Revelation, and it is declared to be part of the divine intention that every man, after due examination of the teaching of ecclesiastical authority, should freely and independently search for God, undeterred by custom or etiquette.

The disposition of Religion, on the contrary, has always been to try to confine that illimitable Enquiry within the boundaries of its own arbitrary demarcation, and to suspect that all search outside them tends to estrangement from God rather than to conversation with him.

The final result is that Art (especially Poetry), even though heretical or heterodox, is God's minister to mankind, just as much as Religion ; both, in fact, emanate from Man, who is himself the highest Revelation known to himself. Investigation into the mystery of evil is investigation into the character of God ; investigation into the mystery of joy is investigation into the character of God. The former leads to the conclusion that the foundation of dogmatic Christianity is unsound, because it implies a view of God's

OR, THE BOOK OF JOB

character which Job could not accept, and, unless the wisdom of the world has been in constant retrogression since his days, neither can we. The latter leads to the conclusion that dogmatic Christianity is a great enemy of human joy, inasmuch as it refuses to permit free scope to the human Mind, and especially to the Imagination, by and through which (as totally differing from and contrary to Fancy) Man alone can achieve that joy of heart which enables him to retire into the chamber of his mind, stored with truth and beauty—the earthly heaven, where he “converses with eternal realities as they exist in the human imagination.”

The presumption on which all rests, that a divine Father of Men exists, does not lie on the surface of things, but must be sought in their deepest wells. He who believes in any sense in the human Mind—in its sacredness, its mystery, its achievements, or its destinies—is not entitled to disbelieve in God ; for the human mind has always postulated God, as if by a divine instinct ; and it seems to me that, even if that instinct were first evinced

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in the rudimentary form of ancestral ghost-worship,¹ such a commencement of Man's worship of God was as natural in the infancy of the human race as a child's commencement of her devotion to babies by a devotion to dolls.

The greatness of Man is always proved by conflict with himself—

Man that is galled with his confines and burdened yet
more with his vastness,

Born too great for his ends, never at peace with his
goal ;²

for thus is divine energy manifested, and
“Energy is eternal delight.”³

¹ See Mr. Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*.

² *Hymn to the Sea*, by William Watson. See his *Collected Poems*, p. 176.

³ See *Selections from the Writings of William Blake*, p. 153.

THE END

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